CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

SUFFERINGS

OF

CHRIST,

In which the Hiſtory of the Paſſion, as given by the Four Evangeliſts, is connected, harmoniſed, and explained.

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THE

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

Before the Civil Tribunal of PILATE and HEROD.

The accounts given by the four Evangeliſts (*a*), connected and harmoniſed.

'AND the whole multitude of them 'aroſe, and bound Jeſus, and led 'him from Caiaphas unto the hall 'of judgment, and delivered him 'to Pontius Pilate the governor: And it was 'early in the morning.

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 1—30. Mark xv. 1—19. Luke xxiii. 1—25. John xviii. 28. and xix. 16

'Then Judas, who had betrayed him, 'when he ſaw that he was condemned, re- 'pented himſelf, and brought again the thirty 'pieces of ſilver to the chief Prieſts and Elders, 'ſaying, I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed 'the innocent blood. And they ſaid, What is 'that to us? See thou to that. And he caſt 'down the pieces of ſilver in the Temple, and 'departed, and went out and hanged himſelf. 'And the Chief Prieſts took the ſilver pieces, 'and ſaid, It it not lawful for to put them into 'the treaſury, becauſe it is the price of blood. 'And they took counſel, and bought with 'them the potter's field to bury ſtrangers in: 'Wherefore that field was called the field of 'blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that 'which was ſpoken by Jeremiah the Prophet, 'ſaying, They took the thirty pieces of ſilver, 'the price of him that was valued, whom they 'of the children of Iſrael did value, and gave 'them for the potter's field, as the Lord ap- 'pointed me.

'And the Chief Prieſts themſelves went not 'into the judgment-hall, leſt they ſhould be 'defiled, but that they might eat the paſſover. 'Pilate then went out unto them, and ſaid, 'What accuſation bring you againſt this man? 'They anſwered and ſaid unto him, If he were 'not a malefactor, we would not have deli- 'vered him unto thee. Then ſaid Pilate unto 'them, Take ye him, and judge him accord-

'ing

'ing to your law. The Jews therefore ſaid
'unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any
'man to death: That the ſaying of Jeſus might
'be fulfilled, which he ſpake, ſignifying what
'death he ſhould die.

'And Jeſus ſtood before the Governor. And
'they began to accuſe him, ſaying, We found
'this fellow perverting the nation, and forbid-
'ding to give tribute to Cæſar, ſaying, That he
'himſelf is Chriſt a King. Then Pilate entered
'into the judgment-hall again, and called Jeſus,
'and aſked him, ſaying, Art thou the King of
'the Jews? Jeſus anſwered him, Sayeſt thou
'this thing of thyſelf, or did others tell it
'thee of me? Pilate anſwered, Am I a Jew?
'thine own nation, and the Chief Prieſts have
'delivered thee unto me: What haſt thou
'done?

'Jeſus anſwered, My kingdom is not of
'this world: If my kingdom were of this
'world, then would my ſervants fight, that I
'ſhould not be delivered to the Jews: But now is
'my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore
'ſaid unto him, Art thou a King then? Jeſus
'anſwered, Thou ſayeſt that I am a King. To
'this end was I born, and for this cauſe came I
'into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs unto
'the truth. Every one that is of the truth hear-
'eth my voice.

'Pilate ſaith unto him, What is truth? And
'when he had ſaid this, he went out unto the
'Jews, and ſaith unto the Chief Prieſts and

'the people, I find no fault in this man.
'And the Chief Prieſts were the more fierce.
'And when he was accuſed of the Chief Prieſts
'and Elders, he anſwered nothing. Then ſaith
'Pilate unto him, Anſwereſt thou nothing?
'behold, heareſt thou not how many things
'they witneſs againſt thee? Jeſus anſwered
'him to never a word; in ſo much that the
'Governor marvelled greatly.

'And the Chief Prieſts ſaid, He ſtirreth up
'the people, teaching throughout all Jewry,
'beginning from Galilee to this place. When
'Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked, Whether
'the man were a Galilean? And as ſoon as he
'knew that he belonged to Herod's juriſdiction,
'he ſent him to Herod, who himſelf alſo was
'at Jeruſalem at that time. And when Herod
'ſaw Jeſus, he was exceeding glad: For he
'was deſirous to ſee him of a long ſeaſon, be-
'cauſe he had heard many things of him; and
'he hoped to have ſeen ſome miracle done by
'him. Then he queſtioned with him in many
'words; but Jeſus anſwered him nothing.
'And the Chief Prieſts and Scribes ſtood, and
'vehemently accuſed him. And Herod and his
'men of war ſet him at nought, and mocked
'him; and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe,
'and ſent him again to Pilate: And the ſame
'day Pilate and Herod were made friends to-
'gether; for before they were at enmity be-
'twixt themſelves.

'And Pilate, when he had called together

'the

'the Chief Prieſts and Rulers, and the people,
'ſaid unto them, Ye have brought this man
'unto me as one that perverteth the people:
'And behold, I having examined him before
'you, have found no fault in this man, touch-
'ing thoſe things whereof ye accuſe him; no,
'nor yet Herod: For I ſent you to him, and
'lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.
'I will therefore chaſtiſe him, and releaſe him.
'Now at the feaſt of the Paſſover, the Gover-
'nor was wont to releaſe unto the people a pri-
'ſoner, whom they would. Therefore, of
'neceſſity he muſt releaſe one unto them at
'the feaſt. And there was one named Barab-
'bas, a notorious priſoner, who lay bound with
'them that had made inſurrection with him,
'who had committed murder in the inſur-
'rection.

'And when they were gathered together,
'Pilate ſaith unto them, Ye have a cuſtom,
'that I ſhould releaſe unto you one at the Paſ-
'ſover. Then the multitude crying aloud,
'began to deſire him to do as he had ever done
'unto them. But Pilate anſwered them, ſay-
'ing, Whom will ye that I releaſe unto you?
'Barabbas, or Jeſus who is called Chriſt?
'Will ye that I releaſe unto you the King of the
'Jews? For he knew that the Chief Prieſts had
'delivered him for envy. And when he was
'ſet down on the judgment-ſeat, his wife ſent
'unto him, ſaying, Have thou nothing to do
'with that juſt man: For I have ſuffered many

'things this day in a dream, becauſe of him.
'But the Chief Prieſts and Elders perſuaded
'the multitude, that they ſhould aſk Barabbas,
'and deſtroy Jeſus. Then they cried out all at
'once, ſaying, Away with this man, and releaſe
'Barabbas: Now Barabbas was a robber.

'Pilate therefore, willing to releaſe Jeſus,
'ſaith again to them, What will ye then that
'I ſhall do with Jeſus who is called Chriſt,
'and whom ye call the King of the Jews?
'And they all cried out, Crucify him! Crucify
'him! And he ſaid unto them the third time,
'Why, what evil hath he done? I have found
'no cauſe of death in him: I will therefore
'chaſtiſe him, and let him go. But they
'cried out the more exceedingly, Let him be
'crucified! And they were inſtant with loud
'voices, requiring that he might be crucified:
'And the voices of them and of the Chief
'Prieſts prevailed. And ſo Pilate, willing to
'content the people, gave ſentence that it
'ſhould be as they required. And he releaſed
'unto them him that for ſedition and murder
'was caſt into priſon, whom they had deſired;
'but he delivered Jeſus unto their will.

'Then Pilate therefore took Jeſus and
'ſcourged him. And the ſoldiers of the Go-
'vernor led Jeſus away into the common hall,
'and they called together the whole band. And
'they ſtripped him, and clothed him with a pur-
'ple robe. And when they had platted a crown
'of thorns, they put it about his head, and a

'reed in his right hand; and they mocked
'him, and began to ſalute him, ſaying, Hail
'King of the Jews! And they did ſpit upon
'him, and took the reed and ſmote him on
'the head, and bowing the knee, worſhipped
'him: And they ſmote him with their hands.

'Pilate therefore went forth again, and ſaith
'unto them, Behold I bring him forth unto
'you, that ye may know that I find no fault
'in him. Then came Jeſus forth, wearing
'the crown of thorns, and the purple robe.
'And Pilate ſaith unto them, Behold the man!
'When the Chief Prieſts therefore and Officers
'ſaw him, they cried out, ſaying, Crucify
'him! Crucify him! Pilate ſaith unto them,
'Take ye him, and crucify him; for I find
'no fault in him. The Jews anſwered him,
'We have a law, and by our law he ought to
'die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God.

'When Pilate therefore heard that ſaying,
'he was the more afraid; and he went again
'into the judgment-hall, and ſaith unto Jeſus,
'Whence art thou? But Jeſus gave him no
'anſwer. Then ſaith Pilate unto him, Speakeſt
'thou not unto me? Knoweſt thou not, that I
'have power to crucify thee, and have power to
'releaſe thee? Jeſus anſwered, Thou couldeſt
'have no power at all againſt me, except it were
'given thee from above: Therefore, he that
'delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.

'And from thenceforth Pilate ſought to
'releaſe him: But the Jews cried out, ſaying,

'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's 'friend: Whoſoever maketh himſelf a king 'ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar. When Pilate there-'fore heard that ſaying, he brought Jeſus forth, 'and ſat down in the judgment-ſeat, in a place 'that is called the Pavement, but in the He-'brew, Gabbatha. And it was the Preparation 'of the Paſſover, and about the ſixth hour; 'And he ſaith unto the Jews, Behold your 'King! But they cried out, Away with him! 'Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate ſaith 'unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The 'Chief Prieſts anſwered, We have no King but 'Cæſar. When Pilate ſaw that he could prevail 'nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, 'he took water, and waſhed his hands before 'the multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the 'blood of this juſt perſon: See ye to it. Then 'anſwered all the people, and ſaid, His blood 'be on us, and on our children! Then deli-'vered he him therefore unto them to be 'crucified.'

The PREPARATORY PRAYER.

O My Saviour! who art inexpreſſibly great and glorious, and haſt been appointed by God to be the Judge of quick and dead; who, in the days of thy humility and ſuffering, didſt permit thy ſacred perſon to be led from one unrighteous judge to another, and every where by thy diſcourſe, thy ſilence, and the ſanctity of thy

thy behaviour, didſt ſhew thyſelf the immaculate Lamb of God; Bleſs the conſideration of the ſufferings, which thou didſt patiently endure before the Civil Tribunal, that our ſouls may thereby be abundantly edified, and by the concurrence of thy grace, may be ſo awakened, that by our ſincere endeavours to be partakers of the fruits of thy ſufferings we may enjoy the benefit of them both in life and death. And as the account of thy unſpeakable ſufferings is ſingular and ſurpriſing beyond all other events recorded in hiſtory; Be pleaſed, O Lord, to crown the conſideration of them with a ſingular bleſſing, for the ſake of thy holy name. Amen.

CONSIDERATION I.

CHRIST *delivered up to* Pilate *the Civil Judge.*

'(*a*) AND the whole multitude of them 'aroſe, and bound Jeſus, and led 'him from Caiaphas unto the hall of judg-'ment, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the 'Governor: And it was early in the morning.'

In theſe words we have an account of the delivering up the Lord Jeſus to Pilate, the civil Judge.

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 1, 2. Mark xv. 1. Luke xxiii. 1. John xviii. 28.

Hitherto

Hitherto the Saviour of mankind had ſtood before the Eccleſiaſtical Court of the Jews. The great Council had examined him about midnight, at the houſe of Caiaphas the High Prieſt; had ſuborned falſe witneſſes againſt him; and laſtly, on his owning himſelf, when interrogated by them, to be the Meſſiah and the Son of God, had condemned him to die as a blaſphemer. On this, that iniquitous court was adjourned; and the Chief Prieſts and Elders ſeparated, leaving the condemned Jeſus in the mercileſs hands of the Officers and ſervants, who ſpent the remainder of the night in committing all manner of inſults and outrages againſt his ſacred perſon. But as ſoon as the day began to dawn, the members of the great Council met again in the High Prieſt's palace, to conſult what farther meaſures were to be taken, and the moſt convenient method of putting the ſentence they had paſſed on Jeſus in execution. It was hereupon reſolved to deliver him up very early in the morning to Pilate the civil Governor, that he might be crucified after the Roman manner. For this end, they ordered the Lord of Glory to be again brought before the Council, and aſked him whether he perſiſted in his former declaration, and profeſſed himſelf to be the Son of God. This true and infallible Witneſs having again confirmed what he had before aſſerted, they alſo on their part confirmed the ſentence of death paſſed on him; and now they gave orders for delivering

vering up Jeſus to the Governor, who was inveſted with the executive power. This is the important tranſaction which is ſo circumſtantially related in the above accounts of the four Evangeliſts, connected and harmoniſed.

In this narrative is mentioned,

Firſt, The perſon whom the Jews delivered up to Pilate. This was Jeſus, the Lamb of God who taketh away the ſins of the world, the univerſal Saviour of all nations; who hitherto had gone about doing good, all over Judea, relieving and healing both Jews and Gentiles, that were tormented by the devil, and afflicted with various diſeaſes and infirmities. That Jeſus was delivered up as a malefactor to the Gentiles, of whom it is ſaid, 'His fame went 'out through all Syria: And they brought unto 'him all ſick people that were taken with di-'vers diſeaſes and torments, and thoſe who were 'poſſeſſed with devils, and thoſe who were 'lunatic, and thoſe that had the palſey; and he 'healed them (*b*):' That benevolent Jeſus, of whom it is farther ſaid, by another Evangeliſt(*c*), 'They ran through that whole region round 'about, and began to carry about in beds 'thoſe that were ſick, where they heard he 'was. And whitherſoever he entered into 'villages, or cities, or country, they laid the 'ſick in the ſtreets, and beſought him that 'they might touch, if it were but the border 'of his garment: And as many as touched

(*b*) Matth. iv. 24. (*c*) Mark vi. 55, 56.

'him

'him were made whole.' That meek Jeſus, who, before, had been delivered up by the traitor Judas, into the hands of the Jewiſh Eccleſiaſtical Judges who ſat in Moſes's ſeat, is now by thoſe iniquitous judges delivered up to the Civil Power.

Secondly, The perſons who led our bleſſed Saviour away are here ſpecified. 'And the 'whole multitude of them aroſe (*d*). When the black deſign of apprehending the bleſſed Jeſus at the Mount of Olives had been concerted, only ſome few of the members of the great Council went as deputies to aſſiſt in that tranſaction: but when Chriſt was to be delivered up to Pilate, not one of them was willing to ſtay behind; for they all unanimouſly determined to accompany him to the judgment-hall. As for the perſons of whom this multitude conſiſted, St. Mark informs us, that 'they were the Chief Prieſts, with the Elders 'and Scribes (*e*);' ſo that this iniquitous procedure was authoriſed and carried on by the Chiefs, and moſt conſiderable perſons, of the whole Jewiſh nation.

Of the Jewiſh Clergy, there were preſent the High Prieſt; and, according to St. Matthew's account (*f*), all the Chief Prieſts; not only Caiaphas the High Prieſt for that year, but likewiſe other perſons of diſtinguiſhed rank, who had filled that dignity, or were Chiefs of the four and twenty orders of Prieſts.

(*d*) Luke xxiii. 1. (*e*) Chap. xv. 1. (*f*) Chap. xxvii. 1.

As

As for the laity, the Elders of the people were preſent; who ſuperintended the political and civil affairs of the Jewiſh people, in ſubordination to the Roman Governor.

Beſides theſe, ſome of the Scribes aſſiſted; who were perſons that acted both as laymen and eccleſiaſtics, and were conſulted in religious as well as civil matters. For the Jewiſh religion, as well as the Jewiſh polity, was grounded on the Law of Moſes. Hence they who ſtudied the Law, and had attained to a competent knowledge of it, were conſulted in all caſes of conſcience, and likewiſe in civil diſputes; ſo that the Scribes were, indeed, the great luminaries of the Jewiſh church and ſtate. The chief Prieſts, by their preſence, imparted the greateſt authority and importance to this mixed multitude. They took along with them the Elders of the people, that from their experience in judicial proceedings, they might the better execute the reſolution they had taken of accuſing the innocent Jeſus before Pilate, as a perſon guilty of ſedition, and other crimes againſt the ſtate. The Scribes were alſo neceſſary for carrying on this iniquitous proſecution, that by their ſkill in the Moſaical Law, they might ſilence the priſoner Jeſus of Nazareth, if he ſhould offer to ſtart any diſpute about the Law before Pilate. Such was their artifice and precaution, in executing the plot they had formed of deſtroying our bleſſed Lord.

But that theſe venerable Chiefs of the Jewiſh nation ſhould take the trouble of delivering Jeſus up to Pilate with their own hands, and walk in proceſſion with him, when other malefactors were only ſent to the Governor by their officers, was, indeed, ſomething very extraordinary; but for this method of proceeding they had weighty motives. By their preſence, their deſign was to keep the people in awe, leſt any attempt ſhould be made by the way to reſcue Jeſus out of the hands of the officers, and to ſet him at liberty. Beſides, they intended to move Pilate to comply with their deſires by their perſonal appearance, which might induce him, without any farther enquiry, immediately to order the execution of a ſentence, which had been pronounced by an aſſembly compoſed of perſons eminent for their ſanctity, wiſdom, and knowledge of the Law: ſo that the Governor might be aſſured, that they had acted in the affair according to the dictates of their conſciences, and the beſt of their knowledge. Theſe were their motives for their aſſociating with the officers of juſtice and executioners, and perſonally conveying Jeſus before the temporal judge. We may conclude that great numbers of the common people (ſome of whom had already got together in Caiaphas's palace, and others by the way) had joined this extraordinary proceſſion.

Thirdly, We have here an account of the manner of leading our bleſſed Saviour to Pilate. St. Matthew

Matthew ſays, 'When they had bound him, they 'led him away.' Jeſus was led away bound: He had been already bound in the garden of Gethſemanè, when he was firſt apprehended, and then ſent in bonds from Annas to Caiaphas (*g*). As mention is here made again of binding Jeſus, it is probable that his bonds were taken off when he was again interrogated the next morning, whether he perſiſted in his former declaration, that this repeated acknowledgement, after his bonds were taken off, might appear to be free and voluntary, not extorted by fear and violence. Being now on his repeated confeſſion a ſecond time ſentenced to death, his beneficent hands were again bound behind his back, and a chain or cord faſtened about his neck and body; and thus was he brought to Pilate as one appointed to die *. But at the ſame time, it is not improbable, that the Lord Jeſus had been kept bound ever ſince he had been apprehended in the garden on the Mount of Olives; but that, as he was to be led along the ſtreets to Pilate's houſe, they bound him faſter, and with ſtronger cords, leſt he ſhould attempt to eſcape, or the people offer to reſcue him by the way. O ye blind guides! ye ſenſeleſs miſcreants! to imagine you can bind the Almighty. If the

(*g*) John xviii. 10, 24.

* Habebant hunc morem, ut quem adjudicaſſent morti, ligatum judici traderent. HIERONYMUS *in* Matth. xxvii. 2. Tom. IX. p. 66. Ed. *Francof.*

perſon

perſon thus bound would have uſed his matchleſs ſtrength, he could have broken all your bonds aſunder, much eaſier than Samſon did the cords with which his countrymen bound him, in order to deliver him up to the idolatrous Philiſtines (*h*). But his love withheld his Omnipotence: It was this that made him willing to obey his Father, by ſubmitting not only to chains, but to death; even the death of the Croſs.

Fourthly, Mention is here made of the place whither our bleſſed Saviour was led. 'They 'led him from Caiaphas to the hall of judg-'ment (*i*).' Thus he was carried out of the High Prieſt's houſe, where ſentence of death had been pronounced upon him, and led away to the judgment-hall, *i. e.* to the palace, where the Roman governor generally uſed to hold his court of judicature. This, according to ſome commentators, was near Antonius's caſtle, and for its ſpaciouſneſs and elegance exceeded all other palaces in the city; eſpecially as it ſtood on ſo high a foundation, that there was an aſcent to it of eight-and-twenty marble ſteps.

Fifthly, The perſon to whom the Lord Jeſus is delivered is here ſpecified. He is deſcribed both by his Office or Dignity, and his name.

As to the former he is ſtiled the Governor *, *i. e.*

(*h*) Judg. xv. 13, 14. (*i*) John xviii. 28.

* Ηγεμων, Procuratorem *vocat* TACITUS, Annal. Lib. XV. C. 44.

i. e. a perſon appointed by the Roman Emperor to govern a province ſubject to the Empire, in the quality of the Emperor's Lieutenant. This Governor was not only to take account of the Emperor's revenues; but likewiſe, when no ſuperior judge was preſent, to adminiſter juſtice even in criminal caſes, and to ſee that the ſentence of death, *&c.* was put in execution.

The name of this Governor or vice-gerent was Pontius Pilate *; a name not unknown in the Roman Hiſtory, and mentioned in one of St. Paul's Epiſtles (*k*), and afterwards inſerted in the Apoſtles Creed. This perſon was ſent to Judea to be Governor of that province of the Roman Empire in the thirteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, and was the fifth in ſucceſſion of thoſe who had been inveſted with this new dignity †. That he not only received the imperial revenues as Treaſurer, but had likewiſe the power of putting capital ſentences in execution, appears both from the hiſtory of thoſe times, and from his own words to Chriſt, namely, 'Knoweſt thou not, that

C. 44. Auctor nominis ejus, CHRISTUS, qui Tiberio imperitante per *Procuratorem* Pontium Pilatum ſupplicio affectus erat.

* See Pearſon on the Apoſtles Creed.

(*k*) 1 Tim. vi. 13.

† *Primus erat* COMPONIUS, *ſecundus* MARC. AMBIVIUS, *tertius* ANNIUS RUFUS, *quartus* VALERIUS CRATUS, *quintus* PONTIUS PILATUS. *Tres priores ab* Auguſto, *duo poſteriores ab Imperatore* Tiberio *miſſi erant.* Vide JOSEPHI Antiquitates Judaicas, Lib. XVIII. C. 3.

'I have power to crucify thee, and have 'power to releaſe thee (*l*)?' This Pilate bears a very infamous character in hiſtory for his flagrant injuſtice, inſatiable avarice, and barbarous cruelty; and among other crimes, is charged with receiving bribes, and even with having put to death ſeveral innocent perſons without any previous trial. If, in our bleſſed Saviour's caſe, he at firſt made ſome ſhow of equity and regard to juſtice, and not only gave our bleſſed Lord a full hearing, but for ſome time ſtood out againſt the unjuſt clamours of the great Council of the Jews; this muſt be attributed to the hand of God, which, for a while, reſtrained this rigorous and cruel judge, (who had ordered the execution of ſo many juſt perſons without any enquiry into their caſe) that the innocence of Jeſus might be manifeſted at his tribunal, a manifeſtation in which the whole race of mankind was ſo nearly concerned. In other caſes Pilate's natural diſpoſition diſpoſed him to injuſtice and cruelty, to condemn the innocent, and to permit all kind of barbarities to be practiſed on them.

But here it may be proper to enquire, What could move the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, which, at other times, had ſuch an averſion to the Roman Governor, to deliver up Jeſus to Pontius Pilate? and why they did not put the ſentence they had paſſed on Jeſus in execution, as they did afterwards in the caſe of St. Stephen the Pro-

(*l*) John xix. 10.

tomartyr

tomartyr (*m*)? To this it may be anſwered, that ſeveral motives might induce the chief Prieſts and Scribes to uſe ſuch a method of proceeding.

The firſt and principal cauſe of this uncommon procedure was unqueſtionably the extreme malice, and implacable hatred, which the Jewiſh judges bore to the ſacred perſon of the Lord Jeſus. For they thought all the capital puniſhments uſed among the Jews, were too mild and favourable for ſuch an execrable malefactor. They choſe therefore that he ſhould die by a painful and ignominious crucifixion; and that conſequently, a perſon put to ſuch an accurſed death might be rendered an execrable object of abhorence to all the Jewiſh people, then preſent at the feaſt of the Paſſover; ſo that no one might hereafter venture to profeſs a belief in Jeſus, or ſpeak favourably of him or his doctrine.

The ſecond motive to this action was their fear of the populace. Of this apprehenſion they had, the day before, given a ſufficient intimation, by ſaying, 'Not on the feaſt, leſt there 'be an uproar amongſt the people (*n*).' They juſtly concluded, that if any tumult ſhould happen to ariſe on this occaſion, Pilate had his Roman garriſon ready at hand, which would ſoon have quelled any inſurrection. They likewiſe conſidered, that by this proceeding they ſhould be better able to juſtify themſelves to

(*m*) Acts vii. (*n*) Matth. xxvi. 5.

the people, and to throw all the blame on the Roman Governor. Hence we find, that they afterwards highly reſented it, when the Apoſtles reproached them to their faces with having killed the Prince of Life (*o*); and complained that the blood of that Perſon was, by the diſciples, wrongly imputed to them, whom they charged with having unjuſtly ſhed it (*p*).

We are informed in the third place, that their hypocritical ſanctity, as the feaſt of the Paſſover was already begun, did not allow them to execute the ſentence of death; which, however, would by no means induce them to put it off till after the feaſt of the Paſſover. Theſe were the principal motives that induced the chief Prieſts, *&c.* to deliver Jeſus to the heathen Governor.

But the over-ruling cauſe of this tranſaction was the wiſe and ſecret decree of God; for St. Peter informs us, that Jeſus was delivered by the determinate counſel and fore-knowledge of God into wicked hands, which crucified him (*q*). Thus God was pleaſed to permit what now happened

1. That the types and prophecies, expreſſive of this circumſtance of our Saviour's paſſion, might be fulfilled. Hereby were to be accompliſhed, the type exhibited by Joſeph, whom his invidious brethren ſold and delivered up to foreigners (*r*), the type of Samſon, who was delivered up by his own people to the

(*o*) Acts iii. 15.
(*p*) Acts v. 28.
(*q*) Acts ii. 23.
(*r*) Gen. xxxvii. 28.

uncircumciſed Philiſtines (*s*), the type of Jonah who was thrown out of the ſhip, and given up to the raging waves of the ſea (*t*). Not only the types, but alſo ſeveral prophecies of the Old Teſtament were fulfilled by this tranſaction. Here Jews and Gentiles conſpired againſt Chriſt the Anointed of the Lord (*u*). Here the Meſſiah is ſurrounded with blood-thirſty dogs (*x*). Here came to paſs what our bleſſed Lord had, ſome time before, declared to his diſciples in theſe words: 'The Son of 'Man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief Prieſts, 'and Scribes, and they ſhall deliver him up 'to the Gentiles (*y*).' By this circumſtance therefore the veracity of God was eminently diſplayed.

2. That the innocence of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt might be rendered more conſpicuous, and manifeſted to the world. Had our bleſſed Lord been immediately dragged out of the Sanhedrim, and tumultuouſly ſtoned, as it happened in the caſe of Stephen, his innocence would not have appeared in ſo conſpicuous a light. But now he is delivered to an auſtere judge, who, after the moſt careful ſcrutiny and ſtricteſt examination, repeatedly declares in the ears of all the Jewiſh nation, 'I find no fault in this man.' Thus the ſpotleſs innocence of Chriſt, after it had been ſup-

(*s*) Judges xv. 12. (*t*) Jonah i. 15.
(*u*) Pſa. ii. 1, 2. Acts iv. 25, 26.
(*x*) Pſa. xxii. 16. (*y*) Matth. xx. 18, 19.

preſſed and traduced before the ſpiritual judges, was the more gloriouſly manifeſted before the civil tribunal.

3. That the meaſure of our Saviour's ſufferings might be completely filled up. Had Jeſus, as I obſerved above, been immediately ſtoned as a blaſphemer, he would quickly have paſſed from death unto life. But now, as he was to be crucified after the Roman manner, his death was preceded by a painful ſcourging, and a ſeries of indignities and inſults. Beſides, this kind of death was of ſuch a nature, that the innocent and ſacred blood of Chriſt, appointed as a ranſom for our ſins, was moſt profuſely ſhed; which could not have properly happened by any puniſhment uſually inflicted by the Jews.

4. The Lord Jeſus was delivered up to the Gentiles, that by this a foundation might be laid for the ſalvation of all people, and that Jews and Heathens might be made partakers of the merits acquired by the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt. This victim was to be the 'propitiation 'for the ſins of the whole world (*z*). To render this glorious truth more worthy of belief, God was pleaſed to permit the Jews and Gentiles to ſtain their hands with this ſacred blood, and that the Heathens ſhould put the finiſhing hand to thoſe ſufferings, which the Jews had already begun to inflict. The High Prieſt was the Chief or Head of the whole

(*z*) 1 John ii. 2.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh nation; and Pilate the Governor was the repreſentative of the Roman Emperor, the ſupreme Head of the whole world at that time. Thus the bleſſed Jeſus was to be accuſed and condemned before the ſupreme ſpiritual court of the Jews, and before the civil tribunal of the heathen Governor, that both Jews and Gentiles might be convinced that they were guilty of his blood; but, at the ſame time, as they were equally guilty, ſo they might equally ſtand in need of, and be entitled alike to, pardoning grace. Oh, what a reviving conſolation is this for us Gentiles! and how mortifying a conſideration to the ſelf-convicted, unrepenting Jew!

Sixthly, and *Laſtly*, The harmoniſed text recited above informs us of the time when the Lord Jeſus was delivered up. St. John obſerves that it was early, *i. e.* about ſix of the clock in the morning, according to our diviſion of the day. In ſuch haſte were theſe blood-thirſty men for bringing this immaculate Lamb to the ſlaughter. Early in the morning, when they ought to have been at their morning devotions, or in the temple, and preparing themſelves for the celebration of the Paſſover, they are taken up with the thoughts of blood-ſhed and murder. O degenerate progeny of Abraham! He roſe early in the morning to bring his ſon Iſaac as a ſacrifice to the Lord, in obedience to his command (*a*); whereas theſe

(*a*) Gen. xxii. 3.

miſcreants are up early to ſacrifice the only Son of God to their malice and rancour. Here was exhibited the following deſcription, which the Prophet Zephaniah gives of the judges of the Meſſiah, 'They roſe early, and corrupted 'all their doings (*b*).' This early delivering up of the Lord Jeſus was chiefly the effect of their execrable malice, and inveterate hatred; which had been hitherto reſtrained from breaking out by their fear of the people, but now, like an impetuous torrent, breaks through and overflows its banks with the greater rapidity. Such was the impatience of this ſavage multitude, that they would not allow the bleſſed Jeſus one hour after he was condemned, to prepare for death, an indulgence uſually granted to all other malefactors; but they longed to ſee him faſtened to the Croſs without any delay. This precipitancy was likewiſe an effect of their cunning; for by this hurry, they intended to anticipate the aſſembling of the people in a tumultuous manner, or the intervening of other affairs which might divert Pilate from putting the unjuſt ſentence in execution. Theſe are the ſix remarkable circumſtances in the leading away of our bleſſed Lord, and delivering him to the civil judge, as related in the harmoniſed account which we have quoted above. We ſhall now, from every one of theſe circumſtances, draw the following ſalutary doctrines for our edification.

(*b*) Chap. iii. 7.

From

From the firſt circumſtance, relating to the perſon who was delivered up, this truth may be learned, *viz.* That the Holy One, by permitting himſelf to be delivered up to the hands of the uncircumciſed, has himſelf taken away the reproach of our ſpiritual uncircumciſion, and gained for us Gentiles a right to be denizens of Iſrael. To die by the hands of the uncircumciſed was, in the Old Teſtament, accounted an accurſed death (*c*). Accordingly Samſon makes this bitter complaint: 'Lord, 'thou haſt given this great deliverance into the 'hand of thy ſervant; and now ſhall I die for 'thirſt, and fall into the hand of the uncircum-'ciſed (*d*)?' Nay, King Saul choſe rather to fall by his own ſword, than to be taken priſoner and inſulted by the uncircumciſed (*e*). And here the moſt ſacred and glorious perſon that ever was on earth ſuffers himſelf to be delivered into the hands of the uncircumciſed, in order thereby to atone for the uncircumciſion of our hearts, which is ſo odious in the ſight of God; and to acquire for us Gentiles a participation of the privileges of the people of God, and admiſſion into the Covenant of Grace, of which circumciſion was once the ſeal. By this our bleſſed Saviour alſo ſanctifies the ſufferings of his members; who afterwards, during the perſecutions of the Roman Emperors, were

(*c*) Ezek. xxxii. 19. (*d*) Judges xv. 18.
(*e*) 1 Sam. xxxi. 4.

brought

brought before Pagan Governors, Judges, and Rulers of provinces, to hear the ſentence of death pronounced on them.

From the ſecond circumſtance, namely, the perſons who delivered Jeſus up, we ſhall make the following obſervation. The clergy and laity joined hand in hand to promote our Saviour's death, which fore-ſhewed how the members and profeſſors of Jeſus Chriſt would be treated in the kingdom of Antichriſt. As the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, after paſſing the ſentence of death on our bleſſed Lord, applied to the civil power to put this unjuſt ſentence in execution; ſo has it been the conſtant practice of antichriſtian churches. When the witneſſes of the Truth have been declared Heretics, and been ſentenced to die, and, if they happen to be of the clerical order, have been degraded, and ſtripped of their ſacerdotal veſtments; they are then delivered up to the civil power. At the ſame time, they make an hypocritical requeſt to the magiſtrate, to proceed againſt the criminal with mildneſs and clemency; but privately inſtigate him to uſe the devouring ſword, and rid the church of a rotten member. Thus John Huſs and other bleſſed martyrs were treated by their perſecutors, and, in this particular, were made like to the illuſtrious Chief of all confeſſors of the truth. The Lord Jeſus was delivered up as a tranſgreſſor of both Tables of the Law. The care of the firſt Table peculiarly belonged to the ſpiritual court; and the civil power took

took cognizance of the breach of the ſecond. Now, as our Saviour was tried before both Tribunals, he ſeemed in appearance to have tranſgreſſed both Tables of the Law. Thus by the abundant merit of this part of his ſufferings, he has atoned for our tranſgreſſions of the firſt and ſecond Tables, and obtained forgiveneſs for us upon our ſincere repentance.

From the third circumſtance, namely, the manner of their leading away our bleſſed Lord, we may learn, That by the bonds of Jeſus Chriſt, in which he was delivered up to his judges, an exemption is obtained for repenting ſinners, that they may not be delivered up to the powers of darkneſs. This procedure againſt the Lord Jeſus would, otherwiſe, have taken place againſt us. We were to have been loaded with chains and bonds, and delivered up to the prince of darkneſs, that the judgment of eternal death which the Divine juſtice had pronounced againſt us, as tranſgreſſors of God's commands, might one day be executed on us. But this ſacred perſon having interpoſed, and ſuffered himſelf to be brought bound before the Judge, hath looſened the bonds of all thoſe who believe on his name, and repent of their evil doings.

From the fourth circumſtance, *viz.* The place whither Chriſt was brought, we may learn, That it is no new thing for the ſeat of judgment, which ought to be an aſſylum to the innocent, to become the engine of injuſtice, by the corruption of human nature. This is not

not an abuſe of a modern date, but was in vogue ſo early as our Saviour's time, and even ſo early as that of Solomon, who complains of it in Eccleſiaſtes (*g*), 'And moreover, I ſaw 'under the Sun the place of judgment, that 'wickedneſs was there; and the place of righ-'teouſneſs, that iniquity was there.' Therefore, if we often ſee juſtice no better adminiſtered in our days, this melancholy ſight ſhould by no means prompt us to deny Divine Providence: On the contrary, we ſhould rather calm our troubled minds, by reflecting that the Son of God, who is appointed to be the ſupreme Judge of the quick and dead, himſelf in his ſacred perſon felt the effects of injuſtice; and by that means, has cleared the way for his followers, that they ſhould not ſtumble at this rock of offence. Beſides, a day of judgment will come, when all the proceedings of human judicatures will be canvaſſed anew, and every act of injuſtice will receive its due reward. To this Solomon alludes in the above cited paſſage, where he adds? 'Then I ſaid in my heart, 'God ſhall judge the righteous and the wicked; 'for there is a time for every purpoſe (*h*).'

From the fifth circumſtance, concerning the perſon to whom Chriſt was led and delivered up, we may learn, That it is to our Saviour's going from one unrighteous Judge to another, that we owe our diſcharge at the righteous tribunal of God. It was certainly not without

(*g*) Chap. iii. 16. (*h*) Eccleſ. iii 17.

deſign

deſign that Jeſus was led from one iniquitous judicature to another, from the Sanhedrim to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate; for, by theſe afflictive circumſtances he has obtained for us a diſcharge from that dreadful ſentence, 'Depart ye curſed into 'everlaſting fire.' The bleſſed Jeſus knows by cruel experience, how it muſt affect an innocent perſon to be brought before unrighteous judges; and therefore, every afflicted and perſecuted Chriſtian may confide in him, and be aſſured that ſuch ſufferings will not eſcape his obſervation, and will one day be abundantly rewarded. Happy are we in having ſuch a Saviour, Redeemer, and Judge! Let us willingly devote ourſelves to the ſervice of Him, to whom we owe our deliverance and freedom. But whoever abuſes this favour of liberty and diſcharge, and will not, while he is on the way, reconcile himſelf to God by faith and repentance, will one day be delivered up to the Judge; and the Judge will deliver him up to the Officer, to be caſt into an everlaſting priſon, from whence there is no releaſe (*i*).

Laſtly, The ſixth circumſtance which I have taken notice of above, namely, the Time when Jeſus was led away, reminds us of this truth, That the early ſufferings of the Lord Jeſus has atoned for our early ſins, if duly repented of. Alas! how often does the riſing Sun behold us in the actual commiſſion of wicked actions, or

(*i*) Matth. v. 25.

at

at leaſt taken up with wicked thoughts, and impious devices? And how many grievous ſins have we committed in our early years, in the morning of our lives, any one of which is ſufficient to condemn us? But that we may not come into condemnation, the Son of God by his early ſufferings, when the riſing Sun beheld his ſacred face buffeted and ſpit upon, and his benificent hands bound with cords, has expiated our early ſins, with the tranſgreſſions and offences of our youth, and has acquired forgiveneſs of ſins to all thoſe who have faith in his name, and repentance towards God. O let us then praiſe him betimes for his early ſufferings! This conſideration ſhould rouſe us from our beds at the dawn of day, and bring us on our knees to offer up oriſons and praiſes to him, who ſo early ſuffered for us; ſhould animate us againſt the leaſt delay of turning to God; ſhould powerfully incite us to dedicate the morning of our lives to the honour of God, and to give up our ſouls and bodies to his ſervice, who hath loved us unto death.

THE PRAYER.

O Moſt holy and moſt merciful God! all praiſe be aſcribed to thee, for giving up the Son of thy love to be judged before ſo many tribunals, that he might experience every afflictive and painful circumſtance, and be an example for

for our imitation in all kinds of ſufferings. Make us, we beſeech thee, partakers of all the benefits purchaſed by the ſufferings of thy dear Son. Excite us all to a ſincere and effectual repentance, that none of us may put off his converſion; and that thoſe, who are yet in the morning of their lives, may not waſte their youth and ſtrength in the ſervice of Satan, but rouſe themſelves from their lethargy, and come to him who can waſh and purify them from their ſins. Grant, O Lord, that thoſe who have already devoted themſelves to the ſervice of thy Son may, from the circumſtances of his ſufferings now conſidered, find their ſouls refreſhed with new light and conſolation, for the ſake of thine everlaſting love, and infinite mercy. Amen.

CONSIDERATION II.

The tragical exit of the traitor Judas.

'(a) THEN Judas, who had betrayed 'him, when he ſaw that he was 'condemned, repented himſelf, and brought 'again the thirty pieces of ſilver to the Chief 'Prieſts and Elders, ſaying, I have ſinned, in 'that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And 'they ſaid, What is that to us? See thou to 'that. And he caſt down the pieces of ſilver

(a) Matth. xxvii. 3—10.

'in

'in the Temple, and departed, and went out
'and hanged himſelf. And the Chief Prieſts
'took the ſilver pieces, and ſaid, It is not law-
'ful for to put them in the treaſury, be-
'cauſe it is the price of blood. And they
'took counſel, and bought with them the
'Potters field, to bury ſtrangers in: Where-
'fore, that field was called the Field of Blood
'unto this day. Then was fulfilled that
'which was ſpoken by Jeremiah the Prophet,
'ſaying, They took the thirty pieces of ſilver,
'the price of him that was valued, whom
'they of the children of Iſrael did value, and
'gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord
'appointed me.'

St. Matthew, as we have obſerved in the preceding Conſideration, had, in the firſt and ſecond verſe of this chapter, begun to relate how the Lord Jeſus was led away from the ſpiritual to the civil judicature. But, before he proceeds in the narrative, he makes a digreſſion to inform us of what had happened to Judas, who had betrayed our bleſſed Lord. For as he was one of the chief inſtruments that Satan made uſe of to promote the ſufferings of Chriſt, the whole church was concerned to know what became of this ſon of perdition. St. Matthew therefore gives us a particular account of his end, as a warning to thoſe, who, againſt their conſciences, and the cleareſt conviction, ſhould oppoſe Him, whom the Father hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world to ſave ſinners.

In

In the above narrative, we have an account of the tragical exit of the traitor Judas; in which we ſhall obſerve,

Firſt, What preceded that cataſtrophè.

Secondly, The means he made uſe of to put an end to his life.

Thirdly, What followed after his death.

I.

Here is related what happened before this cataſtrophè, both with regard to the traitor himſelf, and alſo to thoſe who had bribed him to betray his Maſter.

As to the traitor, he was ſeized with an excruciating remorſe, which diſplayed itſelf by ſeveral outward ſigns.

The remorſe which Judas felt is thus deſcribed, 'Then Judas, who betrayed him, 'when he ſaw that he was condemned, re-'pented himſelf.' Hitherto Judas had probably flattered himſelf, that Jeſus would have eſcaped out of the hands of his enemies, to whom he had ſold him for thirty pieces of ſilver: For he had frequently with his own eyes ſeen Jeſus paſs unhurt through crouds of his enemies, and by that means diſappoint their rage. For inſtance, St. Luke tells us, that the Nazarites 'thruſt him out of their city, and 'led him unto the brow of the hill whereon 'the city was built, that they might caſt him 'down headlong; but he, paſſing through the

'midſt of them, went his way (*b*). And St. John informs us, that at Jeruſalem, the Jews 'took up ſtones to caſt at him: But Jeſus 'hid himſelf*, and went out of the Tem-'ple, through the midſt of them, and ſo 'paſſed by (*c*).' This our bleſſed Lord did, becauſe he knew that his hour of ſuffering was not yet come. It was on this that Judas had preſumptuouſly built his vain hopes; for he did not in the leaſt queſtion but Jeſus would again ſet himſelf at liberty, and break the bonds of his enemies; and in the mean time, he might ſafely keep the thirty pieces of ſilver, and apply them to his own uſe. But ſuch undertakings, as we imagine will be crowned with ſucceſs, are often fruſtrated by the over-ruling Providence of God. The Egyptians boldly ventured into the Red-Sea; but were overwhelmed by the waters, and drowned (*d*).

Now, the traitor was convinced too late, that he had been miſtaken in his expectation. He ſaw that his Maſter was not only condemned to die by the Jewiſh Spiritual Judicature, or the great Council of the Sanhedrim; but that they were going to deliver him up to the Civil Power, that the Roman Governor might order

(*b*) Chap. iv. 29.

* The text ſays, Ἰησους ἐκρυβη, i. e. Jeſus was hid, probably became inviſible, and ſo paſſed through the midſt of his enemies. Our tranſlation renders the verb actively, 'he hid himſelf,' whereas it ſhould be tranſlated as above. *W.*

(*c*) Chap. viii. 59.

(*d*) Heb. xi. 29.

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the ſentence to be executed without delay. Upon this, his ſtony, obdurate heart, which hitherto had been untouched, began to relent. His conſcience, which had been inſenſible, and, as it were, overpowered by a lethargic ſtupidity, began now to awake with loud inceſſant clamours, and to repreſent to him the heinouſneſs of his atrocious crime. The innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, the innumerable kindneſſes which he had received from him, the timely admonitions given him againſt this baſe ingratitude, the approaching ignominious and excruciating death which he foreſaw his Maſter was to ſuffer, the contempt and deteſtation which all the diſciples and followers of Chriſt would be filled with againſt him, as the chief promoter of his death, and the everlaſting puniſhment which would be the conſequence of ſuch execrable perfidiouſneſs and treachery, preſented themſelves at once in a diſmal group to his diſtacted mind, and threw all the faculties and paſſions of his ſoul into the utmoſt perturbation. He now wiſhed, but wiſhed in vain, that he had never engaged in this horrid plot; and, if it had not been carried on too far to be recalled, he would fain have prevented it. That this remorſe of Judas did not conſiſt merely in unactive thoughts, which roſe up ſpontaneouſly in his mind and then ſubſided, like bubbles on the water; but that it was a very painful and heart-felt ſenſation, an inſupportable reflection on what he had done, and pro-

ceeded from an awakened and irritated conſcience, appears from the ſigns by which it diſplayed itſelf.

Firſt, He made a ſincere confeſſion of his crime. He went away to the Chief Prieſts and Elders of the people, and in all appearance whilſt they were yet in Caiaphas's palace, but preparing, after they had paſſed ſentence on our bleſſed Lord, to lead him to Pilate. Some time before, he came to the Chief Prieſts and put this queſtion to them, 'What will you 'give me, and I will deliver him unto you (*e*).' But now he comes to acknowledge with grief and ſorrow of heart, that he had greatly ſinned, and acted a very perfidious, wicked part: 'I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed the 'innocent blood.' In theſe words he makes a confeſſion of the heinouſneſs of his own guilt, and his Maſter's ſpotleſs innocence, whoſe blood he terms 'the innocent blood.' By this confeſſion, he openly arraigns the judgment of the Sanhedrim, and contradicts the ſentence they had paſſed on our bleſſed Lord, namely, 'He 'is worthy of death.' Probably, he had ſome hopes that the Chief Prieſts and Elders, upon hearing this, would relent, and be moved to revoke the unjuſt ſentence they had pronounced, and to ſet his Maſter at liberty. But it happened here, according to the ſaying of Bildad (*f*), that the hope of the hypocrite periſhed.

(*e*) Matt. xxvi. 14, 15. (*f*) Job viii. 13.

Secondly,

Secondly, After this confeſſion, he returned the money which he had received as a bribe to induce him to perpetrate this atrocious crime. 'He brought again the thirty pieces of ſilver.' As yet, he had them all in his hands, and as he had received them from the Chief Prieſts, he brings them the money again. This money, which before had given him ſo much joy, was now an inſupportable burden to his conſcience. He could not bear to carry it about him, but brought it again to thoſe from whom it came; and without doubt he wiſhed, at the ſame time, that as he returned them the pieces of ſilver, they likewiſe would reſtore liberty to our bleſſed Saviour. Nay, when they refuſed to take the money again, and were riſing up, and haſtening to Pilate, Judas made the beſt of his way to the Temple, and caſting down the pieces of ſilver not far from the treaſury, left them there. Thus impatient was the traitor to get rid of this price of innocent blood, hoping by that means, in ſome meaſure, to eaſe his burdened conſcience. Theſe are the two outward ſigns by which Judas evidenced the reality of his ſorrow and remorſe. But if we examine more narrowly into all the circumſtances attending this ſorrow of Judas, it will appear to have ſuch additional marks of ſincerity as may put thouſands of Chriſtians to the bluſh. For

1. He is ſenſible of the crime which he had

committed, and, from the conviction of an awakened conſcience, accuſes himſelf.

2. He confeſſes his ſin. He does not ſay in general terms, I have ſinned; but deſcends to particulars, ſpecifies his crime, and owns himſelf guilty of treachery and blood-ſhed.

3. He does not make this confeſſion of his guilt in an obſcure or private place; but openly, in the preſence of the Elders and Chief Prieſts, whoſe chief inſtrument he had been in apprehending our bleſſed Saviour, and thereby had given the offence.

4. He does not in the leaſt attempt to palliate, juſtify, or extenuate his ſin, or to throw the blame on others; but peremptorily accuſes himſelf as a vile criminal.

5. He hates and deteſts himſelf on this account, and ſhews an abhorrence of his late impious proceeding.

6. His heart is full of ſorrow, and painful remorſe; he wiſhes that the atrocious act had never been committed.

7. He addreſſes himſelf to thoſe perſons, whoſe province it was to give ſpiritual counſel and advice, and to adminiſter comfort to the members of the Jewiſh Church, who applied to them for direction, in difficult caſes of conſcience.

8. He is for reſtoring to his Maſter the honour of which he had robbed him, by declaring him an innocent perſon.

9. He alſo reſtores to the Chief Prieſts the money

money which he had received from them, and will by no means keep the reward of his iniquity.

10. Laſtly, He is deſirous of obliterating the offence which he had given; and, by declaring Jeſus to be innocent, to withhold his enemies from incurring any farther guilt.

Theſe, indeed, are ſigns and tokens of which there is not the leaſt appearance in the ſuperficial repentance of many thouſands of ſinners, who call themſelves Chriſtians. How inconſiderable a figure do the ſigns of repentance, even in many who would paſs for very devout perſons, make, when compared with theſe? How deficient are they in a thorough conviction of their ſins, and a candid confeſſion of them? They, indeed, make little difficulty of acknowledging, that they are poor ſinners; but to own themſelves guilty of this or that particular ſin, though notoriouſly practiſed by them, is what their haughty ſpirits cannot ſtoop to. And whatever they may ſay in their prayers; yet, if they do not abſolutely deny before the world thoſe ſins they are taxed with, they are very ingenious in excuſing, palliating, or covering their ſins under the ſofter name of human foibles. Therefore, they have no hearty contrition for their wickedneſs, no ſincere averſion againſt ſin. The careleſs ſoul feels nothing of inward remorſe, contrition, and ſorrow. The mouth may ſay, I am ſorry, and repent for my paſt ſins, which are many and

great, &c. but the heart flatly contradicts theſe profeſſions, and continues preſumptuous and unmortified. The lethargic conſcience ſtill ſleeps on. Inſtead of reſolving to reſtore ill-gotten wealth, they perſevere in a courſe of extortion, rapine, and injuſtice; and accumulate offences, by adding ſin to ſin. Therefore it is much to be feared, that this ſorrow of Judas will, at the laſt day, ſhame many thouſands of nominal Chriſtians, and condemn their cold, ſuperficial repentance, which never affected the obdurate heart.

But ſome may object, If Judas was ſuch a ſincere and contrite penitent, why was not mercy ſhewn him? Peter, who had acted a much baſer part; who, with horrid oaths and imprecations, had denied the bleſſed Jeſus; and whoſe repentance was not accompanied with ſuch public and extraordinary ſigns of his ſincerity, obtained forgiveneſs: Whereas the unhappy Judas is given up to ſuch inſupportable deſpair, that he puts an end to his wretched life? What could he have done more? what greater ſigns could have been required of him, to demonſtrate the ſincerity of his remorſe and penetential ſorrow? Such, alas! is the depravity of our hearts, that from an ill-timed pity, and falſe compaſſion for Judas, we are inclined to excuſe the traitor, and cenſure Chriſt with rigour and partiality. But on a more attentive conſideration of Judas's ſorrow, we ſhall obſerve in it the following faults and im-

imperfections, to which the rejection of his repentance may be reaſonably imputed.

1. Judas's acknowledgement of his ſin was not a confeſſion of the right kind. His eyes were not illuminated by the light of Grace, to ſee the inward heinouſneſs and deformity of his crime. He only conſidered the mere outward fact; and did not aſcend to the fountain from whence his treachery ſprung, namely, his deteſtable avarice; much leſs did he go to the primary ſource of his corruption.

2. He, indeed, made a declaration of his ſin before men; but we do not read of any confeſſion he made to God, though it was that all-perfect Being, whom he had moſt offended.

3. His trouble and anguiſh entirely proceeded from wrong cauſes. He was afraid of being hated and deſpiſed for his infamous treachery, by all who had any ſenſe of virtue. He was not ſo much affected with ſorrow for the ſin which he had committed, as for the infamy and diſgrace which he had drawn on himſelf, by his execrable perfidy; and conſequently his ſorrow was not a godly, but a worldly ſorrow (*g*). He was not ſorry that he had offended God; but that he had made himſelf a baſe tool, and merited the infamy due to his treachery. It was not ſo much the heinous crime which he had committed that troubled him, as the unfortunate conſequences of it. Had Jeſus extricated himſelf from the hands

(*g*) 2 Cor. vii. 10.

of

of his enemies, Judas would have been very eaſy about his treachery; but what troubled him was, that his wicked project had terminated contrary to his expectation.

4. He ſought counſel and comfort of men, nay, of thoſe men who were the declared enemies of Jeſus Chriſt, and not from God, who alone can heal a wounded conſcience.

5. He, indeed, gives a public teſtimony of his Maſter's innocence; but this teſtimony was extorted from him merely by the racking pains and inſupportable reproaches of a guilty conſcience. Nor did Judas ſufficiently inſiſt on the confeſſion he made; for he thought no more of our Saviour's innocence, to which if he had fled for refuge, it would have been a ſure aſylum to him, and protected him from his fatal deſpair.

6. His returning the bribe, the infamous price of blood, did not proceed from any honeſt diſdain or abhorrence of this reward of iniquity, but from ſelf-love, and a deſire of eaſing his oppreſſed conſcience. Thus a maſter of a ſhip throws ſome part of his cargo over-board in a violent ſtorm; but he does it with great reluctance, and only with a view to ſave the remainder (*i*). Nay, Judas returned the money with precipitancy and regret. It is ſaid, 'He 'caſt down the money in the Temple.' Now ſuch paſſionate and abrupt behaviour can never

(*i*) Acts xxvii. 19.

he

be acceptable to God, ſo as to atone for the commiſſion of the crime which occaſioned it.

7. There is not any hint given in the Goſpel of his having ſincerely humbled himſelf under the mighty hand of God. Inſtead of conſidering the painful remorſe of his awakened conſcience as the juſt puniſhment of his villainy, and patiently ſubmitting to its corrections, he goes away in the heat of his impatience; and in his fury and deſpair puts an end to that life, of which he was not the maſter and abſolute diſpoſer.

8. His ſorrow is followed by none of the genuine fruits of repentance. Here was no conflict againſt ſin, particularly againſt the ſins of deſpair and impatience. There was not the leaſt appearance in his behaviour of forming new purpoſes of real amendment of life, and much leſs of a total change of the temper and diſpoſitions of the heart.

9. In the whole account of the traitor's ſorrow and remorſe there is not a ſingle word about prayer, without which repentance can never attain to a real maturity: for it is a grace to be obtained of God by prayer. He did not betake himſelf to the temple to pray, but only to caſt down the thirty pieces of ſilver, which gave him great uneaſineſs while he kept them in his poſſeſſion.

10. Laſtly,

10. Laſtly, His repentance wanted the chief requiſite and moſt eſſential part, namely, a filial confidence in the infinite mercy of God; ſo that for the ſake of the Meſſiah, who had been long promiſed, he, though a notorious ſinner, might have obtained mercy, pardon, and forgiveneſs. On the contrary, his gloomy diſtracted mind has quite a different caſt; he at once cuts off all hopes of mercy, and, by his deſpair, offends God even more than by his former ſin. Theſe were the principal defects in Judas's repentance, to which the rejection of it may be attributed. Hence it is evident, that he not only wanted faith, but that his repentance alſo was not of the right kind, which is productive of newneſs of life; nor had it the neceſſary qualities to render it effectual. Having thus examined what happened to the traitor before the fatal cataſtrophè, we ſhall proceed, in the next place, to enquire, what were the preceding circumſtances with regard to thoſe, who bribed Judas to betray his Maſter?

The chief Prieſts and Scribes were infected with the moſt relentleſs inſenſibility, previouſly to Judas's tragical end. When the traitor waited on them with his offer of delivering Jeſus into their hands, they undoubtedly received him very graciouſly, and gave him many fair words: but now, when they had attained their wicked ends, they contemn and deſpiſe him. Nay, ſo far were they from ſpeaking a comfortable word

word to him under his remorſe and trouble, that they treated him with a ſupercilious haughtineſs, which naturally muſt have enlarged the wounds of his deſpairing mind.

This barbarous inſenſibility appears, *firſt*, in their ſhifting off the fault from themſelves, by ſaying to the wretched Judas 'What is that to 'us?' We know that we have authority and power to condemn Jeſus of Nazareth as a blaſphemer: If thou art ſo weak and of ſo ſcrupulous a conſcience, as to be troubled for having delivered that criminal into our hands, thou muſt grieve on; it is no concern to us. This was not unlike the impious ſpeech of Cain, who ſaid with the ſame unconcern, 'Am I my brother's keeper (*b*)?'

Secondly, By laying the whole guilt and blame on Judas in theſe words, 'See THOU 'to that.' If you have committed a fault by delivering up this man, you muſt take the conſequences, and bear the puniſhment of it. Miſerable comforters indeed! they here manifeſtly diſplay an obdurate heart, and a ſeared conſcience, by their inhumanity towards a member of their own Church; one that they themſelves had bribed to commit a heinous crime, and whom, on that account, they now ſaw in the agonies of deſpair. Unfaithful paſtors! careleſs ſhepherds, who had no manner of concern for a loſt ſheep! But this was a juſt and deſerved puniſhment on Judas for the

(*b*) Gen. iv. 9.

hardneſs of his ſtony heart. He would not hear the voice of the good Shepherd, nor be brought to a better diſpoſition by the gracious admonitions, which were directed to him the preceding night. He now, by way of puniſhment, falls into the hands of inhuman ſpiritual guides; thoſe falſe ſhepherds and baſe hirelings, who are ſo far from binding up his wounds and healing the ſtripes of his conſcience, that they treat him with an exaſperating haughtineſs, contempt, and diſdain. This is the account of what preceded the tragical end of Judas, both with regard to the traitor himſelf, and of thoſe ſeducers who bribed him to betray our bleſſed Saviour.

II.

As to the ſad cataſtrophè itſelf, or the means he made uſe of to put an end to his wretched life. St. Matthew's account of it is as follows. 'He departed,' or rather withdrew to ſome private place *, as perſons labouring under any melancholy or violent depreſſion of mind uſually do; but by ſo doing he entangled himſelf ſtill more in the tempter's ſnares. For by thus ſhunning the company and converſation of men, he was drawn into the company of evil ſpirits. The

* ἀναχωρεω, *recedo, ſecedo.* Hinc ἀναχωρησε rectè *receſſit* vertitur à Th. BEZA. In Verſione Anglicana hoc verbum, minus accurate, *deſceſſit* redditur. *W.*

Evangeliſt

Evangeliſt farther adds, 'He went out, or 'went away *,' very probably without the walls of Jeruſalem, to ſeek a convenient place, where, by ſuicide, he might put an end to the inward tortures he endured from an irritated conſcience. Thus the traitor went the ſhorteſt way, and haſtened to perdition (*i*). Laſtly, it is added, 'He hanged himſelf †.' He threw himſelf into the abyſs of deſpair, and became the murderer both of his body and ſoul. Thus he executed on himſelf the ſentence which God himſelf had pronounced againſt man-ſellers in the Old Teſtament: 'If 'a man be found ſtealing any of his brethren 'of the children of Iſrael, and maketh mer-'chandiſe of him, or ſelleth him; then that 'thief ſhall die (*k*).'

If we compare what St. Luke ſaith (*l*) concerning the death of Judas, with this account, we ſhall find that it was followed with ſome very remarkable circumſtances. That Evangeliſt tells us in the Acts of the Apoſtles, that 'falling headlong, or rather prone ‡, he burſt 'aſunder in the midſt, and all his bowels guſhed 'out. And it was known to all the dwellers at 'Jeruſalem.' Hence it appears, that either the

* ἀωελθων, profectus. In the Engliſh tranſlation ſimply 'he 'went.' *W.*

(*i*) John xvii. 12.

† Ἀπηγξατο. Sic THUCYDIDES: και ἐκ των δενδρων τινες ἀπηγχοντο. Conf. 2 Sam. xvii. 23.

(*k*) Deut. xxiv. 7. (*l*) Acts i. 18.

‡ πρηνης γενομενος, falling down a ſteep place. *W.*

halter

halter with which he had hanged himſelf broke, and the body fell forward on a pointed rock, which penetrated into it, ſo that all the entrails guſhed out; or that the traitor's body was cut down by ſome perſon paſſing that way, and then rolled down a precipice into a deep valley. After this, as St. Luke adds, his body burſt aſunder in the midſt, and his bowels guſhed out; like thoſe whom the children of Judah caſt down from the top of the rock, ſo that they were broken in pieces (*m*). In this the divine law of retaliation is evidently diſplayed. It was but right that his bowels ſhould guſh out, who had ſhut up his bowels of compaſſion againſt Chriſt *, of which the Meſſiah gives a hint in the book of Pſalms (*n*). Thus the perfidious Judas, after treading in the ſteps of Ahitophel, that treacherous counſellor of King David, came to a ſimilar end: 'For when 'Ahitophel ſaw, that his counſel was not fol-'lowed, he ſaddled his aſs, and gat him home, 'and put his houſhold in order, and hanged 'himſelf, and died *(o)*.'

III.

We come, in the laſt place, to conſider, what followed after the tragical end of Judas. The

(*m*) 2 Chron. xxv. 12.

* Εις τι τα σπλαγχνα τω μη σπλαγχνιζομενω; *ut* GROTIUS *de Joramo ait*, 2 Paral. xxi. 19.

(*n*) Pſ. cix. 18. (*o*) 2 Sam. xvii 23.

chief

chief Prieſts and Scribes, after the traitor's death, conſult together how to diſpoſe of the money which Judas had caſt down in the temple: And here we may obſerve the conſultation of the Jews, and the counſel of God with regard to this particular.

The conſultation of the Jews ſeems to have been held before the Paſſover; ſince on that day, they were too much taken up with the ſolemnization of that high feſtival to deliberate on ſuch trifles. In this conſultation it was repreſented, that the money could not be put into the treaſury; and the proper method of laying it out was at the ſame time reſolved upon.

Concerning the former it is ſaid by the Evangeliſt, 'The chief Prieſts took the ſilver 'pieces, and ſaid, It is not lawful for us to 'put them into the treaſury, becauſe it is the 'price of blood,' *i. e.* money with which a man was bought, who was afterwards condemned to ſuffer a bloody death. Now as God in the Moſaical Law (*p*) had forbidden the hire of a harlot, or the price of a dog to be brought into the houſe of the Lord, both of them being an abomination to him; ſo was it by no means proper, that the price of treachery and bloodſhed ſhould be brought into the holy treaſury in the temple, and be applied to religious uſes. Thus they abhor the fact, which they themſelves had cauſed to be

(*p*) Deut. xxiii. 18.

perpetrated by bribing Judas with this money *. However, they all agreed that this money was to be laid out on ſome charitable foundation, and accordingly purchaſed with it a field, which they appropriated as a bury-place for Pilgrims or foreign Jews, who ſhould happen to die at Jeruſalem. For as every Jew in that city had his particular burying-place for himſelf and family, great difficulties often aroſe about interring in theſe private cemeteries the bodies of foreign Jews who died at Jeruſalem, which happened moſt frequently at the time of the great feaſts. The chief Prieſts therefore were for doing an act of charity to ſuch ſtrangers, by purchaſing with this money a particular burying-place for them. For this purpoſe they agreed with a potter, who had a convenient piece of ground near the city; and as he had already made uſe of the clay in the manufacture he was concerned in, he parted with the field at ſo low a rate as theſe thirty pieces of ſilver †. Accordingly 'They took 'counſel, and bought with them the potter's 'field to bury ſtrangers in.'

But St. Matthew, in his account of this tranſaction, has very carefully obſerved, that the counſel of God over-ruled the proceſs of the

* Benè GROTIUS in Annotat. ad hunc locum: *Damnant in venditore facinus, cujus ipſi emtores erant.*

† About fifteen dollars, or two pounds twelve ſhillings and ſix-pence ſterling.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh Council in this circumſtance. It was ſignally diſplayed

Firſt, In the name of this field, by which the memory of this impious action of the Prieſts and Elders was to be tranſmitted to poſterity. It was therefore by the particular appointment and direction of God that this field was not called the burying-place, but the Field of Blood *, in commemoration of its being purchaſed with the price of blood. St. Matthew adds, 'Which name it retains to 'this day,' *i. e.* to the time when that Evangeliſt wrote his Goſpel; and undoubtedly it ſubſiſted until the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. This name given to the field could not but greatly diſguſt the chief Prieſts and Elders, who would much rather have had the remembrance of their wickedneſs buried in this place of oblivion: But this was not in their power to effect; the hand of God being concerned in the affair. By this charitable foundation for the benefit of ſtrangers, they purpoſed to tranſmit their names with honour to poſterity; but God diſappointed them, and ſo directed the tongues of men, that a name of infamy was fixed on the purchaſe; which, at the ſame time, was to be a ſtanding monument of the truth of this hiſtory. For as this burying-place was called Akeldama, or the field of blood, it na-

* St. Luke in Acts i. 19. calls it in the proper tongue, [the Syrian dialect] Akeldama, חקל דמא *i. e.* the field of blood. *W.*

turally raiſed a curioſity in every one, to aſk the reaſon of impoſing ſo improper a name on the repoſitory of the dead; and this was an enquiry which little redounded to the honour of the members of the Sanhedrim at that time.

Secondly, The counſel of God manifeſted itſelf more particularly in the accompliſhment of the ancient prophecy, to which St. Matthew refers, when he adds, 'Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by Jeremiah the Prophet, ſaying, They took the thirty pieces of ſilver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Iſrael did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me (*q*).' This remarkable paſſage affords the following obſervations.

1. Theſe words occur in the prophecy of Zechariah (*r*), where they are connected with the prediction concerning the ſelling of the Meſſiah for thirty ſilver pieces. But this prophecy is by the Evangeliſt attributed to the Prophet Jeremiah, either becauſe Jeremiah was reckoned the firſt among the Prophets, and on that account all the writings of the Prophets collectively were called by his name *; or becauſe this prophecy had been delivered down by oral tradition from Jeremiah, like that of Enoch (*s*), until at

(*q*) Chap. xxvii. 9. 10. (*r*) Chap. xi. 13.

* Vide JOSUÆ HENRICI OPITII Diſſ. de Jeremiah inter prophetas majores primo. Adde LIGHTFOOTI. Horas Ebr. et Talm. p. 488.

(*s*) Jude ver. 14, 15.

length, God thought fit to have it recorded in the canonical writings by the Prophet Zechariah, who, alſo in other particulars, correſponds with the Prophet Jeremiah. Hence ſome commentators * obſerve, that it is no redundancy of ſpeech in St. Matthew, when he ſays, 'Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by 'Jeremiah the Prophet, ſaying,' as thereby he intends to ſhew, that Jeremiah only enounced this prophecy orally, but that God had employed the Prophet Zechariah to commit it to writing in the canonical books. Theſe are the two moſt unexceptionable ſolutions of this difficulty †.

2. As to the words themſelves, it is to be obſerved, that St. Matthew does not quote them verbally, but according to the ſenſe of them. In the Prophet Zechariah, the Meſſiah himſelf is introduced ſpeaking, and firſt mentioning his heavenly Father's command: 'The 'Lord ſaid unto me, Caſt it unto the potter.' Then follows his obedience in the performance

* Vide DEYLINGII Obſerv. Sacr. Part I. Obſerv. XLIII. *quo judice hoc vaticinium eſt* Jeremiæ, *reſpectu primæ revelationis, et* Zachariæ *reſpectu ſecundariæ revelationis et ſcriptionis. Quem modum in hoc difficili nodo ſolvendo etiam* GROTIUS *et* CALOVIUS *amplectuntur.*

† *Reliquos hunc nodum ſolvendi modos recenſet* CHRISTOPH. WOLFIUS, in Curis Philol. in IV. Evan. pag, 393. *Omnium minimè illi nobis placent, qui* lapſum memoriæ Matthæo *impingunt: inter quos etiam nomen ſuum profitetur* PETRUS POIRET, *in* Apologia Bourignoniæ, p. 77, 81, 82, 83. *Ut nimirum lapſus memoriæ extantiores, quos virgo illa in allegandis ſcriptoribus ſacris ſæpiſſimè committebat, honorificentiùs excuſaret.*

of that command, 'And I took the thirty 'pieces of ſilver, and caſt them to the potter 'in the houſe of the Lord.' As if he had ſaid, By my ſecret over-ruling power I ſo directed the circumſtances of this affair, that Judas ſhould not keep the thirty pieces of ſilver, but throw them down in the temple; and moreover, that the chief Prieſts, though otherwiſe extremely avaricious, ſhould not put them up again in their purſes, nor depoſit them in God's treaſury, but purchaſe a piece of ground of a potter with the money *. The meaning therefore of the paſſage in St. Matthew's Goſpel is this: The chief Prieſts and Elders took the thirty pieces of ſilver, which Judas had caſt down in the temple, and with them bought a potter's field; as the Lord had appointed, that I, the Meſſiah, ſhould conduct the affair in this manner. Now this prophecy is here, in a very wonderful manner, accompliſhed by Divine appointment, and all the offence removed which otherwiſe this whole affair might have occaſioned, to the prejudice of Chriſt's doctrine and innocence; it being from hence clear and evident, that all fell out according to the pre-

* JOHANNES TARNOVIUS *ad hunc locum indicat, Chriſti providentiâ hæc omnia, licèt mala, fuiſſe directa ad hunc finem bonum. Quum Judas cuperet argentum in ſuum uſum convertere, et ſacerdotes mallent ad ſe recipere: tamen Chriſtum, quamquam in ſummâ exinanitione coram Pilato conſiſtentem, adegiſſe Judam ſuâ omnipotentiâ, ut mercedem inquitatis redderet, et ſacerdotum animos permoviſſe, ne theſauro templi adponerent, verum agrum figuli emerent in uſum peregrinorum Hieroſolymis mortuorum.*

deter-

determined counſel and will of God. However, the whole was conducted in ſuch a manner, that God had no part in the wickedneſs of the chief Prieſts and Scribes, or in Judas's deſpair, by approving or promoting their meaſures; yet he ſo directed all circumſtances, that the affair terminated conformably to his eternal decree, as before declared and written by his Prophets.

This is the account which St. Matthew gives of the dreadful exit of the treacherous Judas; from which, in the following Conſideration, we ſhall endeavour to make ſome practical and edifying obſervations.

THE PRAYER.

WE thank thee, O juſt and gracious God, that thou haſt, in thy holy Word, ſo wiſely ſecured us againſt taking offence at the Croſs. Grant, O Lord, that the example of the betrayer of Jeſus Chriſt may make a laſting impreſſion on our ſouls; and in this frightful mirrour, teach us to behold the turpitude of ſin, and how it plunges men by degrees into ruin and perdition. Enable us to conſider, what inſupportable trouble, what horrid ideas an awakened conſcience can raiſe in the ſoul; and what dreadful conſequences attend ſin, how inviting ſoever it may at firſt appear to the unwary ſinner. Keep us, we beſeech thee, from ap-

proaching too near to that venomous ſerpent, leſt we ſhould experience the ſmart of its deadly ſting. May thy grace impart to us a ſalutary repentance, and holy ſorrow; and may the ſufferings of thy dear Son create in us ſuch a godly ſorrow, as may far exceed the remorſe of Judas; a ſorrow which worketh repentance unto ſalvation, never to be repented of. And when we come to know the heinouſneſs of our ſins, and hear the awakening clamours of conſcience, grant that we may fly to the merits of our Mediator for refuge; ſo that we may avoid the fatal rocks of deſpair, and happily arrive at the haven of ſalvation, for the ſake of thine infinite love. Amen

CONSIDERATION III.

The tragical end of the traitor Judas.

IN the laſt Conſideration, I have diſcourſed on the terrible exit of the betrayer of Jeſus Chriſt, according to the account given us by St. Matthew (*a*); and conſidered what preceded the traitor's death, the cataſtrophè itſelf, and what followed it. At preſent, I ſhall only make ſome obſervations on this remarkable event, that it may the more conduce to our advantage.

We ſhall here animadvert

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 3——10.

Firſt,

First, On the traitor Judas.
Secondly, On the chief Prieſts and Elders.

I.

The traitor Judas may be conſidered in three different lights.

Firſt, As a witneſs of the innocence of Jeſus Chriſt.

Secondly, As an unhappy inſtance of a deluded and wretched ſinner.

Thirdly, As an example of deſpair and its fatal effects. From each of theſe particulars we ſhall draw ſome practical inferences for our edification.

Firſt, Judas is to be conſidered as a witneſs of the innocence of our bleſſed Saviour: For his awakened conſcience extorted from him this acknowledgment of it, 'I have ſinned, 'in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.' This teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence deſerves the greater credit.

1. As it proceeds from one of his enemies, who does not ſpeak out of favour or affection to our bleſſed Lord; but condemns his own black perfidy, at the ſame time that he acquits the bleſſed Jeſus from all faults, and acknowledges his ſpotleſs innocence.

2. It proceeds from an enemy of Chriſt who, as he was one of the twelve diſciples, had an opportunity of being with his Maſter every day for above the ſpace of three years, and conſequently was an unexceptionable witneſs

of

of all his diſcourſes, and moſt ſecret tranſactions. Had not Judas made this confeſſion, carnal reaſon, which is ever a declared oppoſer of the Croſs of Chriſt, might have thus argued: Who knows but the man might be urged by his own conſcience, to diſcover the myſtery of iniquity, hitherto concealed in the ſchool of Jeſus of Nazareth? Poſſibly he might have diſcovered, in his more private converſation with his Maſter, many ſecret crimes and pernicious deſigns, which were not ſo well known to the generality of the Jewiſh people; and found himſelf, as it were, forced by inward compunction to report them to the High Prieſts and Elders. But this open confeſſion of his Maſter's innocence, and his own guilt, at once obviates all ſuch unjuſt ſuſpicions. Had he been privy to any criminal proceedings, any thing worthy of puniſhment committed by Jeſus or his diſciples, he would, without doubt, have made it known to the world when he ſaw Jeſus ſentenced to die, in order to juſtify, or at leaſt excuſe, his infamous treachery in the eyes of men. But on the contrary, he was ſo throughly convinced of the perfect innocence and ſanctity of Jeſus Chriſt, that he makes an open, voluntary acknowledgment of his own guilt, and his Maſter's innocence. If the good teſtimony a man gives in behalf of his enemy is by no means to be ſuſpected; the teſtimony of an enemy, who, from a long and intimate converſe, knew

knew all the ſecrets of that perſon whom he has betrayed, muſt ſtill be of greater weight.

3. The confeſſion of Chriſt's innocence is ſtill the more remarkable, as it was made before the whole Sanhedrim, or ſupreme Council of the Jewiſh nation, which had condemned Jeſus to die, and in the very houſe where they had condemned him.

4. The judges, who had condemned our bleſſed Lord, were not able to confute Judas's declaration of our Saviour's innocence, or to give the traitor better information of any crime Jeſus had committed, to deſerve the ſentence they had paſſed on him; but diſmiſs him with this inſulting ſpeech, 'What is that to us? See 'thou to that.' This teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence was corroborated and ſupported by other correſpondent teſtimonies, that very ſame day: For, within a few hours, Herod, Pilate's wife, one of the robbers who were crucified with him, and the Pagan officer who ſtood under the Croſs (perſons who cannot be ſuppoſed to have ſpoken by any preconcerted ſcheme) with one mouth acknowledged our bleſſed Saviour's innocence; ſo that after Judas had in the morning of the ſame day, as it were, given the ſignal for it, one voice ſucceeded another in proclaiming our Lord's innocence, and confirming the teſtimony of Judas.

5. Laſtly, Judas ratified his confeſſion, on the very ſame day that he made it, by his death.

As

As he had, by his treachery, been the occaſion of paſſing the ſentence of death on Jeſus, he had nothing farther to hope or fear from his Maſter: On the contrary, he might have promiſed himſelf the greateſt marks of favour from the enemies of Chriſt, had he adhered to them, and approved of their proceedings in condemning his Maſter to die. What motive could poſſibly have induced Judas to put an end to his own life, had he known Jeſus to be a wicked man, and worthy of puniſhment? He might have extorted more money from the chief Prieſts, whom it highly concerned to juſtify the ſentence they had pronounced on Jeſus, if he had made diſcoveries of any pernicious doctrines taught in the ſchool of Jeſus, and forged tales of illegal and wicked practices tranſacted in private by him and his diſciples. But ſince he goes away and puts a period to his wretched life, after this ſolemn declaration of his Maſter's innocence, it is a certain proof, that he knew no ill of him; ſo that our bleſſed Saviour's innocence, and the truth of the Chriſtian Religion, are in ſome meaſure confirmed by Judas's ſuicide, as well as by the martyrdom of the other Apoſtles. Had Jeſus been an impoſtor, Judas would by no means have deſtroyed himſelf; nor would the reſt of the Apoſtles have ſuffered tortures and death for his ſake. When theſe circumſtances are duly weighed and conſidered, Judas muſt appear to have been one of the principal

principal evidences, that declared the perfect innocence of our bleſſed Lord *. Hence we may deduce the following truths.

1. That it is a wonderful inſtance of the infinite wiſdom and power of God, ſo to order contingencies, that the betrayer of our bleſſed Saviour ſhould give a public and unſuſpected teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence. But let it by no means be concluded from this circumſtance, that Judas was predeſtinated, or pre-ordained, to betray our bleſſed Lord; and that in conſequence of his enormous crime, he ſhould be induced by diſpair to put an end to his life, that by this dreadful cataſtrophè the innocence of Chriſt, and the truth of his doctrine, might be confirmed. We ſhould rather conclude, that God foreſeeing how Judas, from his own depravity and the inſtigation of the devil, would engage in ſuch treacherous practices, did in his infinite wiſdom ſo direct the outward circumſtances of his life, that from the evil which he would have ſpontaneouſly committed, ſome good might accrue to the whole race of mankind; and this good would not have come to paſs, had Judas's commiſſion of the ſame crime been attended with any other circumſtances. This method of deriving good from evil, without being an accomplice in the guilt, is a miracle of Divine Wiſdom. Hence we

* Vide Francisci Buddei Medit. Paſch. *de Juda Iſcharíote, veritatis Evangelicæ teſte; quæ exſtat in* Medit. Sacris, p. 113.

may

may form ſome idea of the motive, which induced our bleſſed Lord to admit into the number of his twelve diſciples this Judas, whoſe treachery he foreſaw, and by that means to give him an opportunity of being daily with him, and to be privy to all his proceedings; ſo that this was done, that his ſubſequent teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence might carry the greater force with it. Let every one therefore, both in ſurveying his own life and the lives of others, obſerve how frequently God, in his infinite Wiſdom, has cauſed good to proceed out of evil; as an expert chymiſt, by a ſkilful proceſs, extracts the nobleſt medicines from rank poiſons. But God forbid! that any one ſhould from this conſideration think it lawful to do evil, that good may come of it; for of ſuch, St. Paul declares the condemnation to be juſt (*b*).

A rational, ſpeculative, and full conviction of the innocence of the ſuffering Jeſus, is not ſufficient to ſhield us from the wrath of God, and the ſentence of condemnation due to ſin. Alas! what did it avail the wretched Judas, that he was convinced of Chriſt's innocence, when he did not believe on him, whoſe innocence he ſo publicly acknowledged? What was Pilate the better for declaring time after time from his ſeat of judgment, 'I find no 'fault in this Man; I am innocent of the blood 'of this juſt perſon?' The one and the other died in their ſins. What will it advantage us,

(*b*) Rom. iii. 8.

that

that in our prayers we daily invoke the name of Chriſt, as the immaculate Lamb of God, if we do not properly apply the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, ſo as to derive from it a real benefit, and a ſubſtantial bleſſing?

Now, in order to reap the true ſalutary effects of the innocence of Jeſus Chriſt, we muſt, in the firſt place, with repentance, and abhorrence of ſin, acknowledge both our original and actual guilt. In the next place, it behoves us to conſider, how God has imputed all our guilt to the bleſſed Jeſus, our Surety, and laid on him the iniquities of us all (*c*): Thus the treſpaſſes of thoſe, who had offended the Divine Majeſty, were laid on the victims deſtined for ſacrifices; and though the animals themſelves were free from any fault or blemiſh, they were ſlain as if they had been guilty of the ſins for the expiation of which they were ſacrificed. Laſtly, we muſt with an humble faith fly to the innocency of our Mediator, and with his ſacred, his innocent blood, as his very betrayer calls it, ſprinkle our hearts from an evil conſcience (*d*), and waſh ourſelves from the ſtains of ſin. We muſt pray for the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to make us righteous, holy, and irreproachable in all our behaviour, by treading in the footſteps of the immaculate Lamb of God. If we conſider the innocence of our bleſſed Lord in this light, it will be to us an inexhauſtible ſpring of comfort, and the moſt effectual remedy againſt deſpair.

(*c*) Iſa. liii. 6. (*d*) Heb. x. 22.

Secondly,

Secondly, Judas may be conſidered as an unhappy inſtance of a deluded and wretched ſinner. He was a deceived ſinner, as he was inſenſibly drawn into ſin by Satan, till he ſunk deeper and deeper into that deceitful moraſs, which ſwallows up the unwary traveller. The firſt bait laid for him by the ſubtile tempter was the thirty ſilver pieces, by which he enticed him to eternal perdition. He thought he was ſure of getting ſomething by his treachery; whereas it proved his utter ruin. He loſt his character and reputation; he loſt a good conſcience; he loſt the grace of God, and the affection of his Maſter; he loſt his poſſeſſions and life, his body and ſoul. Thoſe few ſtrangers who happened to die at Jeruſalem were the only gainers by his wickedneſs, to whom it procured a place of interment; and this was more than he himſelf had, for he lay unburied an accurſed, loathſome carcas, an object of infamy and horror. Such a one may very properly be called a deluded ſinner.

But he was, at the ſame time, a moſt wretched ſinner; one who reaped not the leaſt advantage, ſatisfaction, or delight, from this heinous ſin. The thirty pieces of ſilver, which he received as the reward of his perfidy, his conſcience compelled him to refund; ſo that he got nothing but trouble, anguiſh, and remorſe, and ſuffered by it the moſt dreadful loſs. He was tormented by his own conſcience; he was forſaken by thoſe who ſhould have comforted him;

him; and deſerted even by thoſe who had only the outward appearance of honour and honeſty. Thus was Judas wretched in his life, wretched in his infamous death, and miſerable both in ſoul and body after death. Hence we may obſerve,

1. That a ſinner does not arrive at once at the higheſt pitch of wickedneſs, but walks on to his perdition by inſenſible gradations.

There is indeed in ſin, ſuch an impelling force, ſuch a vehement rapidity, that the ſinner is ſoon carried to exceſſes, which ripen him for eternal deſtruction, unleſs God, who previouſly ſhews all patience and long-ſuffering, even towards the veſſels of wrath that are preparing themſelves for deſtruction, is pleaſed to check this fatal impulſe. Hence it is, that no perſon at once attains to the higheſt pitch of wickedneſs, but arrives at it by a gradual progreſs in ſin. The treachery of Judas was not his firſt crime; for Satan had prompted him to commit a multitude of ſmaller ſins, before he inſtigated him to this deteſtable perfidy. Beſides the original ſin common to him with all other men, he had a wicked diſpoſition, and a ſtrong propenſity to avarice. The next ſtep was a hankering deſire after temporal poſſeſſions, unjuſt gains, and illicit profits, which his office gave him an opportunity of indulging; he being the purſe-bearer, who received and paid money on account of his Maſter and fellow-diſciples. Theſe covetous deſires were accompanied with delight in lucre;

and this was inflamed by his imagination, which figured to itſelf the happineſs of being poſſeſſed of wealth. This inſatiable deſire of riches was followed by a firm reſolution of ſlipping no opportunity of acquiring wealth. This reſolution produced a conſtant endeavour to make the moſt of every advantage, in order to increaſe his ſtore. The next ſtep was to execute the reſolution he had formed, by now and then embezzling a piece of money, by extortion, and receiving bribes; and thus his covetouſneſs brought him to theft. Hence is he termed a thief in the Goſpel (*e*). Satan having cajoled him thus far by means of his covetouſneſs, which is the root of all evil, now proceeded to make farther attempts to bring him to perdition. Now, as Judas did not ſuffer himſelf to be awakened from his lethargy, by the frqeuent admonitions of Chriſt (*f*) to avoid the ſnares of Satan; but went on in his covetouſneſs and theft, till by frequent repetition, they became habitual ſins. He palliates, excuſes, and defends his covetouſneſs, under pretence of care of the poor (*g*). Upon this, he fell into a ſtate of obduracy, hardening himſelf againſt the affectionate warnings of his Maſter; ſo that he grew ſo abandoned and loſt to all ſenſe of ſhame, as ſtill to aſſociate with the other Apoſtles. Nay, he ate the Paſchal Lamb with Jeſus and his diſciples; held out thoſe feet, which were walking in the ways of per-

(*e*) John xii. 6. (*f*) John vi. 64, 70. Chap. xiii. 18, 21.
(*g*) John xii. 5, 6.

dition,

dition, to be waſhed and wiped by his Lord and Maſter, without being in the leaſt moved, or aſhamed, at this condeſcending love of our bleſſed Saviour. Judas, ſeeing that he went on proſperouſly in his pilfering and embezzling, began to contrive how he might enlarge his gains. The Chief Prieſts and Scribes, at that time, being in conſultation on the propereſt means of apprehending and putting Jeſus to death; he immediately laid hold on this opportunity of getting a round ſum at once, by delivering up his Maſter. When our bleſſed Lord revealed to all the other diſciples the evil purpoſe of Judas's heart (which he was for keeping ſo cloſe) and thus detected his villainy, he was ſo chagrined at it, that he broke out of the aſſembly full of rage, malice, and rancour. Upon this, Satan entered into Judas, blinded his mind, and prompted him to put his black purpoſe in execution; ſo that he agreed to deliver up his Maſter to the Jews, for thirty pieces of ſilver. And notwithſtanding Chriſt accoſted him with theſe pathetic words, 'Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with 'a kiſs?' yet he reſolutely perpetrates the villainy he had contracted for. After this, he proceeded ſtill farther, agreeably to theſe words of St. James, 'Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth 'forth death (*b*).' For no ſooner had Judas finiſhed this ſin, than he fell into deſpair; and through deſpair, he plunged himſelf into eter-

(*g*) Chap. i. 16.

nal perdition. Theſe are the ſteps, by which Judas gradually deſcended into the abyſs of deſtruction. O that, from this example of the wretched Judas, we may learn, that in order to avoid great and enormous crimes, we muſt beware of committing the leaſt ſin! O that every one of us may be on his guard againſt the ſtratagems of the devil, who thus inſenſibly leads the ſoul from one ſtep to another, in the way to eternal perdition! O that they, who are given to covetouſneſs and the love of money, may ſeriouſly reflect to what enormities and villainies this vice ſeduces a man! carrying him ſuch lengths, that for a trifling ſum of money he will make ſhipwreck of his conſcience and ſalvation, and for ſome temporary profit or gain, run headlong down the precipice of everlaſting perdition.

2. It is the artifice of the devil, when he tempts a ſinner, to make him believe that ſin is only a trifle, and that the mercy of God is inexhauſtible; but when he has once gained his end, and the ſin is committed, he repreſents it to the ſinner's conſcience in different colours.

This the unhappy Judas experienced to his infinite grief, and irreparable loſs. To betray Chriſt, at firſt ſeemed to him but as a very ſlight fault; ſo that he quickly reſolved on it. He thought his Maſter, out of his abundant goodnature, and uncommon mildneſs and lenity to great ſinners, would ſoon forgive him; and that as Jeſus had eſcaped thro' the midſt of his enemies

more

more than once, he would eaſily extricate himſelf from the danger he was going to involve him in. As to the former ſuppoſition, he was confirmed in it, as Jeſus had publicly declared, 'he that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt 'out' or reject. But Satan, having now gained his point, and ſeduced Judas into ſin; he aſſumes another tone, and repreſents the affair in a very different light. The ſin, which before ſeemed to Judas a trifle light as air, now oppreſſed his conſcience as an inſupportable load; ſo that he was cruſhed under the oppreſſive weight of it. On the other hand, the mercy and lenity of Chriſt, which he before thought to be without bounds, vaniſhed from his mind; ſo that he no longer entertained any hopes of pardon and forgiveneſs. Thus it is with the careleſs and ſecure. They firſt look on ſin as a grain of ſand or a mote in the ſun, and make no account of it; but afterwards it ſwells to a gigantic ſize, even beyond the ſtretch of their imagination. Satan firſt allures them with a vain hope of God's mercy, and thereby brings them preſumptuouſly to ſin, from an aſſurance of pardon and forgiveneſs; but after the ſin is committed, he fills them with fears and terrors, by repreſenting to their conſciences the Divine Juſtice, and thoſe dreadful threatenings which God has thundered againſt ſinners. Happy is the man, who, before he commits ſin, thinks on the juſtice and purity of the Deity, in order to deter him from ſinning; but

after he has ſinned, reflects on the infinite mercy of God, and by that conſideration is preſerved from falling into the abyſs of deſpair.

3. Satan extenuates great and flagrant crimes, by inſpiring the ſinner with a falſe and deluſive hope.

Judas was puffed up with the vain hope, that Chriſt would not fail at once to break aſunder all the cords, with which his enemies would bind him, and by that means eſcape out of their hands. It is probable that his conſcience, at firſt, made ſome ſtruggle againſt the temptation to commit ſuch a horrible crime; but he was at laſt over-perſuaded by this falſe hope, which at length turned the ſcale in favour of covetouſneſs, againſt the dictates of his conſcience. This is the caſe with many thouſands of unhappy ſinners. Some are led into ſin by the impious hope, that their crimes will never come to light, and conſequently that they ſhall eſcape the puniſhment which the law inflicts on ſuch crimes. Others are drawn on by a preſumptuous hope of obtaining pardon and forgiveneſs from the Divine Mercy, which is infinite and inexhauſtible. Others again are allured into wickedneſs by the hopes, that they ſhall prevent any ill conſequences that may follow on their ſins; and others by the hopes, that they ſhall one day repent, and intreat forgiveneſs of God; that they will be able to repair the faults they ſhall have committed, by other good works, and by that means to balance their

account

account with Heaven. By theſe deluſive and groundleſs ſuppoſitions, a ſinner is induced to commit the moſt heinous crimes, and greateſt villainies. But when matters turn out afterwards quite contrary to his vain expectations, and he finds himſelf deceived in his hope, then he acknowledges with grief and confuſion, that he never could have thought that this would have been the conſequence of his ſins; and if he could in the leaſt have imagined it, he would never have ventured to commit them. But let us maturely conſider, that when a ſin is once committed, it is no longer in our power to prevent the conſequences of it. When a ſtone is once thrown by the hand or ſling, we can no longer direct its courſe by a wiſh: As little is ſin, when once committed, ſubject to our wiſhes and directions. Let us therefore turn a deaf ear to the ſolicitations and blandiſhments of falſe hope; for the end of ſuch a deluſive hope is deſpair.

4. The reſtitution of ill acquired goods is, indeed neceſſary, but when ſuch a reſtitution does not proceed from a true faith and ſincere repentance, it will not huſh the importunate clamours of conſcience.

Judas brought his thirty pieces of ſilver again; for to him they were then ſo many coals of fire, which he could no longer carry in his boſom. But, as this reſtitution was done with rage and paſſion, and did not proceed from a real hatred of ſin; but from ſelf-love, for he imagined, that by this

means he ſhould quiet his troubled conſcience; it availed him nothing. It is a certain and invariable maxim, That the ſins of theft and fraud will never be forgiven, without either reſtoring what has been ill-gotten to the parties defrauded; or, if that cannot be done, by diſpoſing of it for the uſe of the poor, and thus reſtoring it to God, the Sovereign and univerſal Proprietor of all things. For while wealth acquired by indirect and diſhoneſt means is retained, there can be no real hatred of the ſins of fraud, theft, and diſhoneſty *. But if ſuch reſtitution be not made out of a filial affection and ſincere love towards God, we cannot promiſe ourſelves any advantage from it. However, reſtitution is by no means to be accounted a full ſatisfaction for the theft committed; but only as a part of that method which God has propoſed to obtain forgiveneſs of ſins, and as a proof of the reality and ſincerity of our repentance for any frauds or injuſtice, of which we have been guilty.

5. A ſinner may proceed a great way in the duty of repentance, from the mere natural impulſe of his conſcience, when it is awakened by preceding grace; and yet come ſhort of the deſired haven of ſalvation.

The traitor's conſcience being diſturbed, he did many things which are not practiſed by mere nominal Chriſtians, as I have obſerved in the preceding Conſideration. But what did all this avail him, ſince he did

* Vide Traitè de la Reſtitution, par M. LA PLACETTE.

not

not perſevere in his repentance, until he had got ſafe in the harbour of Salvation? He practiſed ſeveral duties, which made a ſhow of a ſincere repentance; but yet his heart remained obdurate and unconverted. He was more intent on aſſwaging the pangs of his conſcience, than ſolicitous to be abſolved of his guilt. O ye ſinners, whoſe conſciences have been awakened from a ſtate of ſecurity, behold youſelves in this mirrour! Give yourſelves no reſt, until you are truly humbled before God; until you are paſſed from the Law to the Goſpel*. Haſten to Chriſt, that fountain which is freely opened for ſin and uncleanneſs; and ſeek not ſo much to appeaſe your conſcience, as to free youſelves of that guilt, which oppreſſes and diſturbs it.

6. All thoſe, who are deſtined to be Miniſters and Teachers in the Church of Chriſt, ſhould have the example of Judas before their eyes, as a continual warning and admonition. They may particularly learn theſe important truths from it.

1. A perſon may have a lawful call to the Miniſtry, and yet be found a wicked and unprofitable ſervant. Judas did not get among the number of the Apoſtles by any indirect means, ſuch as are practiſed by too many in our days. He was regularly called to that high office; and yet he proved a ſcandal to the holy Function. Therefore, when a Miniſter

* Vide Francisci Buddei Diſſertationem de felici à Lege ad Evangelium tranſitu.

has nothing to plead, but the legality of his calling, he is not a whit better than the traitor Judas. For what does it avail a man to boaſt of a legal calling, without endeavouring to fulfil the duties of his function?

2. A perſon may be poſſeſſed of extraordinary gifts, and great natural endowments, and yet be a child of perdition. Judas unqueſtionably was not without his peculiar talents. The bleſſed Jeſus, who had choſen him for the work of an Apoſtle, undoubtedly imparted to him the qualities neceſſary for the diſcharge of that high office. However, he went, as the ſcripture informs us, 'to his place.' Therefore, let no one truſt to his gifts and natural endowments, but endeavour that his heart may be ſanctified by grace; otherwiſe, while he preaches the Goſpel to others, he himſelf may be a caſtaway.

3. God uſually diſcharges every unfaithful ſteward of his myſteries, and ſends him out of his houſe. He bears with them for a time, as Judas was permitted to remain about three years in the Apoſtolic College. But, at a proper ſeaſon, God will deliver his Church from ſuch unfaithful paſtors.

4. To record the ſignal inſtances of Divine Judgments is an important article in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory. St. Luke was not ignorant, that the tragical exit of Judas had been before related by St. Matthew; yet he, by the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, has likewiſe inſerted it

in the hiſtory of the Primitive Church (*i*). It was particularly neceſſary, that ſuch an inſtance of a wicked Miniſter ſhould be recorded in the New Teſtament, that the way to the miniſterial office might be barred againſt deceitful paſtors, and a holy fear impreſſed on them. It was therefore fit that this dreadful example ſhould be known to all that dwelt at Jeruſalem (*k*).

Thirdly, Judas may be conſidered as an example of diſpair and its fatal effects. Satan having enticed Judas to ſin, continued pouring oil on the fire which burnt in his boſom, augmenting the torture of his conſcience, and, on the other hand, diminiſhing the Divine Mercy; until at length, the traitor ſeeks a ſolitary place, and there puts an end to his wretched life, by hanging himſelf. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. That ſolitude may be a very great ſnare to a ſinner, when the conſcience is troubled and oppreſſed.

Our bleſſed Lord himſelf, in his extreme agony on the Mount of Olives, was not quite alone; but took with him three of his diſciples to the Garden of Gethſemanè, though when he went to pray, he withdrew from them about the diſtance of a ſtone's-caſt. Therefore, it much more behoves diſquieted Chriſtians, when under ſevere temptations from the gloomy ſpirit of melancholy, to abſtain from ſolitude and retirement, that they may not be overcome by the ſubtile tempter. But here,

(*i*) Acts i. (*k*) Acts i. 19.

indeed,

indeed, two extremes are to be avoided. On one ſide, ſolitude muſt at ſuch times be ſhunned; on the other ſide, we are no leſs to avoid ludicrous companions. Many unexperienced perſons run to the latter, that they may drink or jeſt away their melancholy, which is ſo troubleſome to them. Though grief and melancholy may, for a time, be diverted by ſuch expedients; yet they will break out again with redoubled violence, like a ſtream, which, after its current has been ſtopped for a while, forces its way through all obſtacles with the greater rapidity and force. The middle way, between theſe two equally dangerous extremes, is to have recourſe to godly converſation, or to join in prayer with ſome other devout perſons; and to ſpend the reſt of our time in an extraordinary application to buſineſs, or diligent working in our reſpective callings. By this means, many of the temptations of the evil ſpirit of melancholy will be avoided or vanquiſhed.

2. The horrid inclination to ſuicide, which ſome gloomy minds are poſſeſſed with, muſt be overcome by prayer, and the Word of God.

Had the unhappy Judas armed himſelf with theſe ſpiritual weapons, and manfully handled them, he had not been carried to ſuch a deplorable exceſs. But let his irreparable loſs make us wiſe and cautious. This ſpecies of temptation is not ſo uncommon as we are apt to think, and thoſe perſons who are naturally of a melancholy diſpoſition are too liable to it. When

ſuch

ſuch men happen to fall into extreme poverty, or meet with any ſevere misfortunes and uncommon calamities; when they labour under lingering pains, or are much troubled in their conſciences, then Satan infuſes ſuch horrid thoughts as theſe into their depreſſed minds: "There is no hope left for me, and my caſe "is irremediable. It is only plunging into "the water, or properly uſing a piſtol, a ſword, "or other inſtrument of death, and there is "an end of all my pain of body, and terrors of "mind at once, *&c.*" But when we are aſſaulted by ſuch temptations, let us beware of giving way to an immoderate fear, and dejection of mind, but be of good courage, and combat againſt them with the word of God and prayer; and let us impreſs on our minds a proper idea of the heinouſneſs and guilt of the ſin of ſelf-murder *, that we may always think of it with the

* The guilt of this ſin will appear more evident from the following inconteſtible poſitions laid down by Dr. Marperger, in his 'Admonition againſt the damnable ſin of ſelf-murder,' publiſhed at Nurenberg in the year 1715.

1. That a man, who lays violent hands on himſelf, acts contrary to the firſt Law of Nature; and conſequently is worſe than a Heathen, nay, than any of the brute creation.

2. He offends, in the moſt heinous manner, againſt the written Law of God in the ſixth Commandment.

3. He ſins againſt God in the moſt eſſential articles of the Chriſtian faith. He not only deſies the tribunal of Divine Juſtice, but likewiſe the throne of Divine grace and mercy; nay, he renounces his baptiſmal vow, and diſclaims all allegiance to the true God.

4. He

the abhorrence and horror it deſerves. Now, to ſuppoſe, that by the ſacrifice of our own lives we can appeaſe the wrath of God, and render him propitious to us by ſuicide, is the very height of abſurdity and frenzy. Can fire be quenched by fire? can ſmaller ſins be expiated by a greater? Can any thing be more prepoſterous and wicked, more impious and abſurd, than ſuch a ſuppoſition? When Satan therefore ſuggeſts ſuch impious and deſponding thoughts to us, let us oppoſe his temptation by repreſentations of a quite different

4. He impiouſly encroaches on the eſſential prerogatives of the moſt High God; and conſequently is guilty of the moſt flagrant treaſon againſt the Divine Majeſty, the puniſhment of which crime is beyond our power to deſcribe.

5. He totally diveſts himſelf of the image of God and Chriſt, and puts on the reſemblance of the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning; but appears, in this reſpect, more horribly criminal than Satan, becauſe he murders himſelf.

6. He turns his back on the whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, and from a diſciple of Chriſt becomes a revolted traitor, like Judas Iſcariot.

7. He does himſelf an irreparable injury, and the moſt horrid miſchief that can be conceived; for, by putting an end to his life, he cuts off his time of repentance and grace, after which there is no ſalvation.

8. With his wretched life he deſtroys his character, and leaves a deplorable legacy of affliction and trouble to his unhappy family.

9. He has not the leaſt warrantable plea to urge for his horrid crime. He does not find that exemption from pain and remorſe, which he ſeeks; but, on the contrary, plunges himſelf into the deep abyſs of grief, horror, and deſpair; and conſequently is moſt wretchedly blinded, and deceived by Satan and his own unaccountable frenzy.

kind

kind *, and foil the tempter by making uſe of our reaſon and the Word of God.

3. Deſpair is a dangerous rock, on which thoſe who have ſailed on the ocean of life with proſperous gales, and live in the greateſt ſecurity, are often ſhipwrecked.

The greater the carnal ſecurity of an impenitent ſinner has been, and the leſs ſenſe he has had of his danger, the greater and more inſupportable his deſpair is, when his conſcience comes to be awakened, and he finds himſelf ſurrounded with perils. Judas was preſumptuous, ſecure, and inconſiderate, until his execrable crime was completed; and ſlighted all the kind admonitions of the Lord Jeſus to the laſt. But after the commiſſion of the ſin, when the affair turned out contrary to his expectation, he was ſeized with melancholy, dread, and horror equal to his former vain ſecurity, and unthinking levity. This is ſtill the caſe with thoſe, who ſin in expectation of grace and forgiveneſs. Before the ſin is committed, Satan encourages them to hope; but after the full commiſſion of it, he tells them, to deſpair of pardon and forgiveneſs from the mercy of God. Therefore, if we would avoid falling into deſpair, we muſt not ſuffer ourſelves to be lulled into too great a ſecurity. Indeed it does not always happen, that actual deſpair follows a ſtate of

* See Dr. Iſaac Watts's 'Preſervative againſt ſelf-murder,' printed at London, 1726. Adams, &c. on the ſame ſubject.

too

too much ſecurity. Many thouſands die tranquil and eaſy, in their preſumptuous reliance on God's mercy; but their horror and deſpair will be the greater and more intolerable, when their conſciences come firſt to be awakened in a miſerable eternity. For one who has ſplit on the rocks of deſpair, a thouſand go to the bottom in their ſecurity and negligence *; and to their laſt gaſp cling to a deluſive hope of the Divine mercy, without endeavouring to render themſelves the proper objects of it by repentance and godly ſorrow. But as ſecurity may be the way that leadeth to deſpair, it behoves us to be no leſs on our guard to avoid one ſnare of Satan, than the other.

4. Covetouſneſs, and an inordinate love for the things of this world, are often the cauſes and fore-runners of melancholy and deſpair.

For, according to St. Paul, 'the love of money 'is the root of all evil, and not only draws men 'into temptations and ſnares, but likewiſe drowns 'them in deſtruction and perdition (*l*);' and the ſad example of Judas teaches us, that it leads to deſpair, and then plunges the unhappy ſinner into eternal ruin by ſelf-murder. When a man withdraws his heart from God, and fixes his affections entirely on temporal things, if he is afterwards deprived of them by robbery, fire, the ravages of war, or any other accident;

* Plures ſperando quàm deſperando pereunt. AUGUSTINUS.

(*l*) 1 Tim. vi. 9.

or

or, if his conſcience happen to rouſe him, and lay open to his affrighted mind the groupe of ſins, by which he has amaſſed together that unrighteous mammon; his ſoul is torn with anguiſh and remorſe, and becomes like the troubled ſea. At ſuch a criſis, if the power of Satan avails itſelf of the perturbations of his unbelieving heart, he plunges himſelf into the abyſs of deſpair. Let us therefore remove far from us every cauſe and occaſion of deſpair; and, if we would not make ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience, let us avoid coveteouſneſs and an overfondneſs for the things of this world.

II.

Let us, in the next place, take into our conſideration the chief Prieſts and Scribes, who had bribed Judas to commit this treachery.

In the whole tranſaction with Judas, and with regard to the price of blood, which the traitor reſtored to them, the chief Prieſts and Scribes plainly ſhewed themſelves

1. Unfaithful and wicked ſhepherds, and guilty of thoſe vices with which the Prophet Ezekiel charges the ſhepherds of Iſrael (*m*). They were void of all paſtoral care and affection towards the loſt ſheep, that came to them acknowledging his ſin. They had not the leaſt compaſſion, the leaſt ſympathetic feel-

(*m*) Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

ing for him; were not moved with the leaſt inclination to relieve him. They rather inſulted him in a haughty manner, ſaying, 'What is that to us? ſee thou to that.' They had been the vile ſeducers, who had bribed the traitor to commit this infamous crime, and now they leave the ſeduced wretch to ſhift for himſelf; and it was a matter of indifference to them, that Satan by their means deſtroyed a ſoul. They ſhewed themſelves

2. Vile hypocrites. They made a ſcruple of putting the price of blood into the holy treaſury in the temple; yet they had not ſcrupled to bribe a wretch to betray innocent blood, with the ſame money. They provide a place of interment for the bodies of ſtrangers, dying at Jeruſalem; but the ſouls of the living they think below their care. They are for getting themſelves a name by a charitable foundation, and raiſing a monument to their own vain glory, in order to cover the bloody ſtains with which their deteſted names were ſprinkled by their condemnation of our bleſſed Lord. But they failed in this their hypocritical aim; for God plucked away the maſk from their wickedneſs and injuſtice.

3. Laſtly, They ſhew that the Scriptures were fulfilled in them, though they were not conſcious of it; for, contrary to their intention, they gave occaſion to the accompliſhment of the prophecy written by Zechariah, as mentioned above. Agreeably to this, St. Paul obſerves,

ſerves, 'that they who dwelt at Jeruſalem, 'and their Rulers, becauſe they knew him 'not, nor yet the voices of the Prophets which 'are read every ſabbath day, fulfilled them 'in condemning him (*n*).' From theſe three characters of the Rulers and Scribes, we ſhall draw the following inferences for our admonition and improvement.

1. A ſinner, after the commiſſion of any grievous crime, cannot promiſe himſelf the leaſt counſel, aſſiſtance, relief, or compaſſion, from thoſe who, for their own private views, have ſeduced him to commit it.

Notwithſtanding the fair words and promiſes the chief Prieſts had given Judas, when they wanted his aſſiſtance in the execution of their wicked devices; after he had ſerved their impious purpoſe, they treated him with contempt, haughtineſs, and inhumanity. This is generally the way of ſeducers; when they have drawn any one into the ſnare, they never offer to help him out of it: And if the affair happens to miſcarry, they know how to extricate themſelves out of the danger. If the perſon whom they have ſeduced makes any complaint to them about remorſe of conſcience, they only ridicule him as a weak man, addicted to melancholy and lowneſs of ſpirits. Miſerable comforters! deteſtable perfidiouſneſs of the world! Surely this conſideration ought to deter every one from following its wicked courſes.

(*n*) Acts xiii. 27.

2. Divine Providence eminently diſplays itſelf in bringing to light the infamy of the wicked, and the evil devices of hypocrites, though they labour ever ſo much to conceal them.

The chief Prieſts were for palliating their wickedneſs and injuſtice by a pretended charitable foundation, and employed the price of innocent blood in purchaſing a field for the interment of ſtrangers; that they might be ſaid to be good men, who ſhewed ſuch a fatherly concern for indigent ſtrangers, by providing a convenient place near Jeruſalem to bury them in. But the wiſe and juſt providence of God ſo ordered it, that this, their pretended pious foundation, was branded by the people with an infamous name, which tranſmitted to poſterity the remembrance of the wickedneſs of its founders.

Every one, who does not willfully ſhut his eyes againſt conviction, muſt have obſerved ſimilar proceedings of Divine Providence in the hiſtories of ſtates and kindgoms, as well as in daily occurences. The Searcher of hearts generally expoſes hypocritical and wicked men; and often fixes a mark of infamy on thoſe actions, by which they aim at the reputation of extraordinary ſanctity. Oh, that this may deter every one from hypocriſy, and ſecret villainy! and that all hypocrites may ſee their own deformity in the characters of Gehazi, Judas, the chief Prieſts, and Jewiſh Rulers!

3. Wicked men and hypocrites, unknowingly, and againſt their intention, are often made uſe of as inſtruments to fulfill the prophecies recorded in Scripture.

How many are there who by there own example verify St. Paul's words: 'Evil men, and 'ſeducers, ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving, 'and being deceived (*o*).' How many who call themſelves Chriſtians inſult and perſecute the ſervants of God, and thus unknowingly fulfill the ſaying of the ſame Apoſtle: 'All, who will live 'godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer perſecuti-'on (*p*).' But alas! how miſerable will be their lot, who thus, contrary to their knowledge or intention, confirm the truth of the holy Scriptures! God forbid, that we ſhould be found amongſt ſuch an evil and perverſe generation!

THE PRAYER.

PRAISED be thy name, O faithful and gracious God, who, in thy holy Word, haſt cauſed to be ſet before us ſuch examples, by which we may learn to avoid thoſe fatal rocks on which they made ſhipwreck of their faith and ſalvation. Preſerve us, O Lord, from grievous and preſumptuous ſins; and when, through the temptations of Satan, and the ſollicitations of our own fleſh, we are ſo unhappy as to fall, keep us from filling up

(*o*) 2 Tim. iii. 13. (*p*) 2 Tim iii. 12.

the meaſure of our tranſgreſſions by heaping ſin upon ſin, and from adding to our accumulated guilt a ſinful deſpair of thy mercy; that mercy which thou haſt promiſed unto ſinners in Jeſus Chriſt, and has ſworn by thyſelf to make them partakers of. May we rather make thy mercy our refuge; and, when we are ſinking, lay hold of this plank, that we may reach the haven of ſalvation. Grant this through the merits of thy beloved Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IV.

The firſt Conference between Pilate *and the Accuſers of the* LORD JESUS.

'(*a*) AND the chief Prieſts themſelves 'went not into the judgment-hall, 'leſt they ſhould be defiled; but that they 'might eat the Paſſover. Pilate then went 'out unto them, and ſaid, What accuſation 'bring ye againſt this man? They anſwered 'and ſaid unto him, If he were not a male-'factor, we would not have delivered him up 'unto thee. Then ſaid Pilate unto them, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to 'your law. The Jews therefore ſaid unto 'him, It is not lawful for us to put any man 'to death: that the ſaying of Jeſus might be

(*a*) John xviii. 28—32.

'fulfilled,

'fulfilled, which he ſpake, ſignifying what 'death he ſhould die.'

We have hitherto conſidered how the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, after pronouncing ſentence on the bleſſed Jeſus, ſent him away bound from Caiaphas's palace; and by break of day, brought him to the judgment-hall of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. We have farther obſerved, how Divine Providence, juſt when they were going to lead him away to the civil tribunal, gave a remarkable check to the progreſs of the chief Prieſts and Elders in their unparalleled injuſtice; for the very traitor, whom they had bribed to betray his Maſter, with his own mouth proteſted to them, that Jeſus was innocent of the crimes he was charged with, ſaying, in the preſence of them all, 'I 'have ſinned in that I have betrayed the in-'nocent.' We have likewiſe ſeen the little account they made of this confeſſion of Judas, being ſtill unmoved, and reſolved to perpetrate their wicked purpoſe. We ſhall now proceed to conſider what happened to our bleſſed Saviour in Pilate's judgment-hall.

The Holy Spirit ſeems to have taken particular care, that this part of the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion ſhould be the more accurately and circumſtantially related by the four Evangeliſts, becauſe he foreſaw what falſe and ſpurious accounts of this tranſaction would be afterwards diſperſed, both among the Jews and Gentiles. The Emperor Maximinus, from an

inveterate malice and rancour againſt the ſacred perſon of Chriſt, and the Chriſtian Religion, ordered a book to be expreſly written under the title of the *Acts of Pilate* *. This ſpurious account was ſtuffed with the moſt impious blaſphemies againſt our bleſſed Lord; and the Emperor cauſed a great number of copies of this book to be tranſcribed, and diſperſed all over the Roman Empire. He even ordered it to be introduced into the ſchools of the Chriſtians, that their children, by learning it by heart, might in their tender years be prejudiced againſt the doctrines of Chriſt. In order to obviate theſe ſcandalous falſities, and to fruſ-

* *Duplicis generis* Acta Pilati *olim exititerunt; quædam conficta à nonnullis Chriſtianis, in honorem Servatoris, ad quæ* JUSTINUS MARTYR, Apol. I. pro Chriſtianis, p. 76. *his verbis provocat:* και ταυτα ὁτι γεγονε, δυνασθε μαθειν ἐκ των ἐπι Ποντιυ Πιλατυ γενομενων ἀυτων, *quod repetit*, p. 84. TERTULLIANUS, in Apologetico, C. XXI. EUSEBIUS, Hiſt. Eccl. Lib. II. Cap. 2. EPIPHANIUS Hær. L. Quartadecimanorum Num. 1. *et alii. Quædam imperatoris Maximini juſſu conficta, et* A. C. CCCXI. *publicata ſunt, de quibus* EUSEBIUS Hiſt. Eccl. Lib. IX. C. 5. *ex verſione* RUFINI: Confinguntur etiam acta quædam velut apud Pilatum de Servatore noſtro habita, in quibus adverſus Chriſtum omnis blaſphemia conſcribitur. Quæ Acta per omnes regni ſui provincias prælato edicto mitti præcipit, et per urbes ſingulas, per vicos, per agros etiam proponi: præceptoribus quoque puerorum tradi jubet, ut pro iis, quæ ad ediſcendum dictare ſolent, hæc tradant pueris memoriæ commendanda. *Et libro* IX. *C.* 7. Pueris ſcholaris meditatio de Pilato et Jeſu haberi contumeliæ noſtræ gratiâ juſſa eſt, et confictis referta blaſphemiis Acta per totum diem decantari. *Eadem habent* NICEPHORUS, Lib. VII. C. 26, 27. ALB. FABRICII Codex Apocryphus N. T. Tom. I. p. 214. Tom. II. p. 480. *et* ANTON. van DALE in diſſ. de Actis Pilati, *quæ ſubjecta eſt editioni* II. de Oraculis.

trate

trate this foreſeen contrivance of Satan, the Spirit of God directed the ſacred penmen, for the prevention of ſo great an evil, thus circumſtantially to ſet down every thing that paſt between Jeſus and Pontius Pilate; and more particularly, and with the utmoſt punctuality, to make mention of Pilate's often repeated teſtimony of our Saviour's innocence.

As to the particular part of it which is now under conſideration, it contains an account of Pilate's firſt conference with the accuſers of the Lord Jeſus; in which we may obſerve,

Firſt, What immediately preceded this conference.

Secondly, The conference itſelf.

I.

We ſhall, in the firſt place, conſider what immediately preceded this conference both on the ſide of the Jews, and on that of Pilate.

Concerning the Jews it is ſaid (*b*), 'They 'themſelves went not into the judgment-hall.' The Jews, *i. e.* the chief Prieſts, Scribes, and Elders, having brought Jeſus to the door of Pilate's houſe, where he alſo uſed to hold his court of judicature; they ſtaid without, and ſent in to requeſt the favour of Pilate, that he would be pleaſed to ſtep out of the judg-

(*b*) John xviii. 28.

ment-

ment-hall, and hear their charge, and the ſentence they had paſſed on Jeſus.

St. John the Evangeliſt mentions the two following reaſons for this behaviour of the Jews.

The *firſt* is, that they might not be defiled. The Jews by their ceremonial law were liable to numberleſs defilements. They were defiled by going into an unclean houſe; it was a defilement to touch a dead body; and they were polluted by many other circumſtances, which Moſes particularly enumerates in Leviticus (*c*). However, it does not in the leaſt appear from the Moſaic Law, that they would have defiled themſelves by going into the houſe of an Heathen. This was no more than a traditional right, enjoined by the Scribes and Phariſees; but in the obſervance of it, many were more punctual than in their obedience to the expreſs commands of God himſelf.

Thus when Peter went into the houſe of Cornelius, a Pagan officer, thoſe Chriſtians who ſtill adhered to the Jewiſh traditions and cuſtoms, reproached him with it, as a very great offence, ſaying, 'thou wenteſt in to men un-'circumciſed (*d*).' But this inſtitution of the Scribes and Elders, though varniſhed over with a pretended deteſtation of idolatry *, was chiefly

(*c*) Chap. xi.——xv. (*d*) Acts xi. 3.

* Omne id, quod ſic dicitur de non admittendo idolatrarum conſortio, idolatriæ cauſâ introductum eſt, juxta id, quod dicitur Exod. xxxiv. 16. MAIMONIDES ad Tr. *Aboda zara* C. IX.

the

the effect of the extreme pride and haughtineſs of the Jews, who looked on the Gentiles as unclean dogs *, and aſſerted, that it would caſt a blemiſh on the dignity of a Jew to enter into the houſe of a Heathen. Hence it appears, that it was from this Jewiſh pride and haughtineſs, that the Chief Prieſts and Elders made a difficulty of entering into Pilate's houſe, leſt they ſhould be defiled; for, according to the Law (*e*), pollutions were more carefully to be avoided at the feaſt of the Paſſover.

Secondly, Beſides this general motive for not entering the judgment-hall, they now had this particular motive, namely, that they were to eat the Paſſover. They had eaten the Paſchal Lamb the evening before, at the very time when Jeſus was celebrating that inſtitution with his diſciples ‡; ſo that by the Paſſover here is underſtood, not the eating of the Paſchal Lamb, but the Paſchal Sacrifices, which were to be offered during the ſeven days of that feſtival. It was now the firſt day of the feaſt, on which the Jews uſed to kill a great number of ſheep and oxen †; and, after laying ſome parts of the

* Vide JOHANNIS LIGHTFOOTI Horæ Ebr. et Talm. ad Matth. xv. 26. SELDENI Jus Nat. et Gentium ex diſciplina Ebræorum, lib. II. Cap. 7.

(*e*) Num. ix. 6. &c.

‡ Uti pluribus probat Jo. FRISCHMUTH in Diſſert. de Agno Paſchali, utrum eum eodem cum Judæis die comederit Salvator?

† Sic ſacrificia paſchalia etiam Paſcha vocantur Deut. xvi. 2. 1 Par. xxiv. 8, 9. Adde HADRIANI RELANDI Antiqu. Ebræorum, Part IV. C. III. §. XI.

victims

victims on the Altar as a burnt-offering, they did eat the remainder in the courts of the Temple, with great rejoicing (*f*). But it was not lawful for thoſe who had contracted any defilement, ſpecified either in the Divine Law or their own inſtitutes, to aſſiſt at theſe ſacrifices; for, according to the expreſs order of God, no unclean perſon was to eat of the Paſchal Lamb, nor of the fleſh of the Paſchal-offering (*g*). Theſe hypocrites, pretending that their tender conſciences would not admit of their entering Pilate's houſe, ſent in a requeſt, that he would do them the favour to come out, and confer with them at the door, which was all that the Jewiſh Law allowed of at ſuch a time *.

As for what paſſed on Pilate's ſide, the Evangeliſt ſays, 'Then Pilate went out unto them.' Beſides the marble portico before the door, there appears to have been a paved court before the palace, which was the place where Pilate conferred with the High Prieſts, Scribes, and Elders. Had this Heathen Governor been inclined to aſſume a proper dignity, and ſtrictly adhere to the ceremonial in ſuch caſes, he might have diſmiſſed them with a reproof; and this he might the rather have done, as the

(*f*) Numb. xxviii. 16, 18, 19.

(*g*) Levit. xxii. 4, 5, 6.

* Quum non poſſunt omne cum alienigenis colloquium vitare, ita rem temperaverant, ut diebus ſacris et præparatoriis ad ſacra eos privatim accedere non licet, ſed publicè, ſi quod urgeret negotium, alloqui eos poſſent: quod commentum erat frivolæ ſuperſtitionis. HUGO GROTIUS ad Joh. XVIII. 28.

High

High Prieſt could not have produced any Divine Law, which prohibited them from going into the houſe of a Heathen judge. For this was no more than a cuſtom introduced by their pride, and an inveterate contempt of the Gentiles. But here he acted like a prudent and cautious politician; conforming to this uſage of the Jews, that he might not provoke them by inſiſting on an unneceſſary punctilio, which might render them his enemies: For he well knew, that this ſuperſtitious people would rather ſuffer ten thouſand deaths, than deviate the leaſt tittle from their ceremonies and traditions. But undoubtedly his heart was inclined to act in this manner, by the ſecret working of Divine Providence, that the trial of our bleſſed Lord might be made more public, and his innocence manifeſted to the whole world.

Let us now view theſe circumſtances with a ſpiritual eye, and conſider what myſtery of iniquity lurked under them; in which we ſhall be aſſiſted by the following obſervations.

1. It is the uſual practice of impious hypocrites to pay a greater regard to the traditions and ordinances of men, than to the revealed Law of God.

Of this, the enemies and accuſers of our bleſſed Saviour here furniſh us with a ſignal inſtance. The commandments of God are: 'Thou ſhalt not kill: Thou ſhalt not bear 'falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour (*b*)': The

(*b*) Exod. xx. 13, 16.

'inno-

'innocent and righteous ſlay thou not (*i*)'. But theſe Divine commands they ſlight and preſumptuouſly tranſgreſs; whereas they pretend conſcientiouſly to obſerve the injunctions of their forefathers *, which made it improper to go into the houſe of a Heathen, as it polluted and rendered them unfit for the celebration of the Paſſover. God, by enjoining that no unclean perſon ſhould eat of the Paſchal Lamb or the Paſchal-offering, intended to denote, that no perſon can have fellowſhip with Chriſt, who does not deny all fellowſhip with the dead, unclean, and unfruitful works of darkneſs. Theſe hypocrites throw away the ſubſtance of the Divine Law, and graſp at the ſhadow. They abhorred the pollution of the Gentiles; and yet make uſe of their aſſiſtance, in order to oppreſs the innocent. Their care to keep themſelves from outward defilement extended even beyond the bounds that God required: But purity of heart and conſcience was quite out of their thoughts; for they are counteracting them by unjuſt and blood-thirſty deſigns. Thus our bleſſed Lord very juſtly upbraided them with 'laying aſide the Commandments of 'God, and holding the traditions of men (*k*).'

This is ſtill the uſual practice of hypocrites, and particularly prevails moſt in the Church of

(*i*) Exod. xxiii. 7.

* Ab Haſmonœis interdictum illud factum eſſe dicitur, *Gemara Babyl. ad Tit. Aboda zara, cap.* 2.

(*k*) Mark vii. 8.

Rome,

Rome, in which Chriſtianity is, as it were, overwhelmed by a deluge of human ordinances. For inſtance, God has forbidden drunkenneſs, and cauſed it to be inſerted in that black liſt of the works of the fleſh, which exclude men from the kingdom of God (*l*). On the other hand, there is not a ſyllable in the whole Scriptures that prohibits Chriſtians from eating fleſh in Lent. Notwithſtanding all this, the Romiſh Church accounts it a great abomination to eat fleſh in Lent, without purchaſing a diſpenſation; though in that holy ſeaſon, it is permitted to indulge one's ſelf in any other kinds of dainties, and the moſt delicate fiſh of all ſorts, which, however, are a ſpecies of fleſh (*m*), and with the richeſt wines, *&c.* * even to intemperance. Nay, in many Popiſh countries, fornication, adultery, perjury, fraud, violence, and murder, are accounted leſs criminal than eating fleſh, fowl, milk, *&c.* in Lent. As God himſelf has inſtituted, ſanctified, and bleſſed the ſtate of matrimony; ſo has the ſame Divine Authority, in the ſtricteſt manner, forbidden fornication. Notwithſtanding this, Popery, from political motives, interdicts marriage to both their Regular and Secular clergy; whereas the keeping of concubines is often connived at, and conſequently fornication is accounted a

(*l*) Gal. v. 21.

* Nam Vinum non ſolvit jejunium, *ex mente pontificiorum*: vel Potus non frangit jejunium.

(*m*) 1 Cor. xv. 39.

much leſs ſin, than to live in the married ſtate*. Hence it is evident, that the decrees of the Pope are more implicitly obeyed than the commands of God. I need not here mention the toleration and privileges granted at Rome, the reſidence of his Holineſs, to proſtitutes and public brothels ‡. Do not theſe diſtinguiſhing marks exhibit a ſtrong reſemblance between Popiſh and Jewiſh hypocriſy?

2. To make a ſcruple of tranſgreſſing vain traditions and trifling obſervances, and to commit the greateſt crimes without any difficulty, is in the eyes of God a moſt abominable hypocriſy.

Of this we have here a flagrant inſtance in the accuſers of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. Their conſciences would not allow them to go

* FRANCISCUS COSTERUS, *celebris Jeſuita, in Enchiridio Controverſiarum*, Tit. de Cœlibatu C. XIX. prop. IX. Sacerdos, ſi fornicetur, aut domi concubinam foveat, tametſi gravi ſacrilegio ſeſe obſtringat, graviùs tamen peccat, ſi contrahat matrimonium. *Nimirum gravius peccatur obediendo Deo, quam non obediendo Papæ. Similiter* SLEIDANUS de Statu Religionis lib. IV. p. 62. *ex ore* CAMPEGII, *Nuncii Apoſtolici, hæc refert:* Scire ſe, Germaniæ epiſcoporum hunc eſſe morem, ut acceptâ pecuniâ ſcortationem ſuis permittant; fore etiam, ut ejus facti rationem aliquando reddant: ſed tamen idcirco non iſtis licere matrimonium contrahere, et quòd ſacerdotes fiant mariti, MULTO ESSE GRAVIUS PECCATUM, quam SI PLURIMAS DOMI MERETRICES ALANT.

‡ *Pluribus id probat* HENRIC. HEIDEGGERUS in Myſterio Babylonis magnæ, Tom. II. p. 355. ubi inter alia obſervat, Sixtum IV. Pontificem nobile lupanar Romæ erexiſſe, et annuum vectigal lupanarium, quod nonnumquam 20 millia ducatorum exceſſerit, in ærarium ſuum intuliſſe; quod tributum ad hunc uſque diem Pontifices ex publicis urbis lupanaribus accipiunt. *Proh facinus abominandum!*

into

into the houſe or judgment-hall of a Heathen Governor: but they made not the leaſt ſcruple of committing the greateſt injuſtice, by condemning an innocent perſon; of rejecting the Meſſiah; of paſſing ſentence of death on the Prince of life, and the only Son of God, as a blaſphemer; and laſtly, of delivering him up to the Heathens in order to be executed, according to the iniquitous ſentence they had paſſed on him. They would by no means defile themſelves, that they might celebrate the Paſſover; but did not reflect, that to the wicked and unbelieving nothing is pure, but every thing is defiled, even their mind and conſcience (*n*). Their feet, which were ſwift to ſhed blood, were by no means to go over the threſhold of the Governor's houſe, and yet their blood-thirſty deſires, like ravening wolves, had long before entered the judgment-hall. This was a vile and moſt ſcandalous hypocriſy, by which the bleſſed Jeſus, whom they had already ſentenced, was as it were again moſt ſtrongly accuſed, and his pretended guilt increaſed. For, the greater ſhow of ſanctity his enemies put on, the more the people became perſuaded that ſuch very pious and conſcientious perſons would never have condemned our bleſſed Lord, if they had not found him guilty of the moſt enormous crimes. Under ſuch diſguiſes and maſks of pretended ſanctity, was the innocent Jeſus condemned to ſuffer death; and to this

(*n*) Tit. i. 15.

preſent day, it is often the caſe of his innocent members.

By this part of his ſufferings, has our bleſſed Saviour expiated this kind of hypocriſy, if we repent of it in time. Too many in our days make a conſcience of committing ſmall faults, and often refrain from things lawful, or even proper to be done; and yet do not ſtick at the commiſſion of any real ſins. For inſtance; ſome would think themſelves defiled, were they, out of regard to an infirm ſtate of health, to eat a bit of bread in the morning before they partake of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but at the ſame time approach the Lord's Table with impenitent hearts, and minds tainted with malice and envy, and after the celebration of the Euchariſt, return to their former ſins, their avarice, injuſtice, pride, drunkneſs, *&c.* without any ſcruple. Some ſcruple to kneel at the Lord's Table by another, whom they look upon as a great ſinner, and unworthy partaker of the bleſſed Sacrament, that they may not be offended by him; but forget that they are guilty of judging another, and of a breach of charity, which is ſo ſtrongly recommended by this ſacred inſtitution of our Lord and Saviour, whoſe particular injunction it was, to judge no man, and to love one another as he hath loved us. Many pretend a ſcruple of conſcience againſt diſtributing to the poor according to their large abilities: For, ſay they, We do not know what uſe the poor may

make

make of our liberality; they may laviſh it away in a riotous manner, and by that means, make us partakers of all the ſins committed with the money we beſtow upon them, or at leaſt make us encouragers of idleneſs and ſloth. But their ſordid avarice, their hard heartedneſs, and want of charity towards the poor and neceſſitous, which are the real motives of their refuſing to relieve the diſtreſſed, they account no ſins; theſe ſit very eaſy on their conſciences. Many likewiſe ſcruple to bear the leaſt detriment to their honour: They think themſelves authoriſed by laws, both human and divine, vindicate their character, and revenge every affront offered them; whereas they pay little regard to the honour of their great Creator, but inſult his Divine Majeſty by deliberate ſins, which they make no ſcruple of committing. Thus, this kind of hypocriſy, which was ſo glaringly conſpicuous in the enemies of Chriſt, ſtill prevails too much among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. Oh, that every one who finds his reſemblance in the inſtances we have given, may be brought to acknowledge the deceitfulneſs of his wicked heart! and when he is convinced of his inſincerity, may he ſeek for the remiſſion of ſuch abominable hypocriſy, by a ſincere repentance, and faith in Jeſus Chriſt.

3. When Chriſt and his members are to be oppreſſed, Satan eaſily perſuades unconverted worldlings to forego all the reſpect due to their

rank and character, which, at other times, they ſo ſtrenuouſly inſiſt upon.

In the inſtance before us, Pilate, the Roman Governor, deigns to comply with the deſire of the Jews; he condeſcends to come out of his palace, to confer with them, and hear their complaints, in the paved court before his door. This proceeding very well comports with the maxims of policy and worldly wiſdom. But the myſtery of iniquity had alſo a ſhare in it; namely, That when Chriſt and his members are to be perſecuted, Satan can bring the moſt haughty to ſubmit to the neceſſary complaiſance and condeſcenſions to effect their wicked purpoſes. At other times, ſuch worldly politicians will not hear of any action unbecoming their rank and dignity, or any condeſcenſion derogatory to their honour; yet when Chriſt and his members are to be injured, they forget their high rank and dignity, and join with the meaneſt of the people in puniſhing the innocent. Then all diſputes about precedency are ſet aſide; every thing is tranſacted without ceremony, and the lay-perſecutors of the followers of Chriſt, chearfully accommodate themſelves to the deſire of his Eccleſiaſtic-enemies. Such an unaccountable harmony can the hatred of Chriſt bring about among wicked men: whereas thoſe conferences that are held for the promotion of the public welfare, or for eſtabliſhing peace among princes, often miſcarry for want of an agreement in the ceremonial; none of the parties

parties being willing to ſhew the firſt example of condeſcenſion, for accompliſhing ſo deſirable an end. This is a myſtery of iniquity, to be obſerved in Pilate's behaviour on this occaſion. Should not the love of Chriſt, therefore, move us to a voluntary denial of our own will and pretended honour, ſince an inveterate hatred of Chriſt had that ſurpriſing effect on his enemies?

II.

We come, in the next place, to conſider the conference which was held between the Jews and Pontius Pilate; which contained the following particulars.

Firſt, Pilate's queſtion, 'Pilate ſaid, What 'accuſation bring ye againſt this Man?' The members of the Sanhedrim, or great Council, being themſelves come in perſon to deliver up the priſoner, whom they had taken and bound, to Pilate; he could not but look on them as the plaintiffs or accuſers; and therefore was for knowing the ground of their charge againſt him, accounting it abſurd to condemn a man to die, who had not yet been convicted of a capital crime. This had the appearance of a good beginning; and afforded ſome hopes, that Pilate would have proceeded equitably and conſcientiouſly in this trial. But it is well known from hiſtory, that he had unjuſtly condemned to

death many perſons without any hearing *; ſo that this queſtion did not proceed from any moral regard to juſtice and impartiality, but a mere outward compliance with the Roman Law. For, as Feſtus, another Roman Governor, obſerved, It was not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he who is accuſed, have the accuſers face to face, and have licence to anſwer for himſelf concerning the crime laid againſt him (*o*). However, it were to be wiſhed, that all ſucceeding judges had imitated the example of Pilate in this particular; and, inſtead of precipitately paſſing ſentence on good men, as heretics, on the informations of malicious and idolatrous Prieſts, firſt required evident proofs of their guilt, and examined the cauſe to the very bottom. Such an impartial proceeding would have ſaved the blood of many martyrs and confeſſors of the truth.

In this proceeding of Pilate, we are likewiſe to look to the counſel of Almighty God, which directed this unjuſt judge to demand a proof of their accuſation, that the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, which had been obſcured and overpowered in the Spiritual Court of the Jews, might at the Tribunal of Pilate be fully diſplayed; and that by its effulgence and genuine

* PHILO enim Judæus Pilato exprobrat *crebras cædes indemnatorum*, et crudelitatem ſæviſſimam. Vide LIGHTFOOTI *Opera*, *Tom.* II. p. 808, 816, 817.

(*o*) Acts xxv. 16.

luſtre,

luſtre, it might diſſipate all the dark clouds of calumny. The innocence of our Mediator and Redeemer was to be thus manifeſted, that every one might be convinced that it was not for his own ſins, but for the ſins of others he ſuffered. This was the queſtion put by Pilate; to which

Secondly, The Jews made this rude anſwer: 'If he were not a malefactor, we would not 'have delivered him up unto thee (*p*).' Theſe great perſonages were offended, that the Roman governor ſhould preſume to aſk them, on what account they were for having Jeſus of Nazareth crucified, ſince this looked as if he had ſuſpected their impartiality and juſtice. As if they had ſaid, Do you not know that the Roman emperors have left us an abſolute priviledge of taking cognizance of crimes committed againſt our Law, and of paſſing ſentence on the criminals? We are not obliged to give you, who are a Heathen, the reaſons of our judicial proceedings. It is our buſineſs to try cauſes, and your part to put our ſentence in execution, without any farther queſtioning the legality of the ſentence we have pronounced. This is an infringement of our privileges and liberty, which we can by no means admit of. Thus they oppoſed their authority and privilege to the power of the civil Judge, in hopes that Pilate being intimidated by their reſolute behaviour, would, without any further enquiry,

(*p*) John xviii. 30.

and in deference to their judgment, give orders for the immediate execution of the priſoner. They thought it ſufficient that they had found Jeſus guilty, and that Pilate ought to acquieſce in their ſentence.

How rude and uncivil was this anſwer? It was not long ſince Jeſus had been accuſed of rudeneſs in the Jewiſh Court of Judicature, and a blow had been given him by one of the officers of the court, with this reprimand, 'Anſwereſt thou the High Prieſt ſo (*q*)?' If we conſider this behaviour of the chief Prieſts and Elders towards their acknowledged ſuperior, it is eaſily ſeen that they were much more wanting in reſpect to Rulers, than our bleſſed Lord, whom they unjuſtly taxed with that fault.

Thirdly, We may obſerve Pilate's anſwer to the Jews, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.' Pilate ſaw through their crafty deſigns, and that they were for putting him on proceeding in this affair contrary to the Law of the Romans, and all juſtice and equity. He was offended that they were for making him, as it were, their tool, and blindly to complete, without ſo much as knowing on what account, the unjuſt proceedings they had carried on againſt Jeſus; and therefore he retorts their incivility in theſe words, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to your Law.' As if he had ſaid, If you have a law, by which a man may be ſentenced to die, and executed,

(*q*) John xviii. 22.

without

without a trial, judge your malefactor according to your own law. We, Romans, have other laws, which are more agreeable to equity and juſtice. If you do not think me worthy of being informed of the reaſon of your paſſing ſentence of death on this man, ſince, poſſibly, you are conſcious it will not bear examination, I look upon myſelf above being your tool, to put in execution any of your illegal ſentences. As for what concerns yourſelves, execute what you have decided, at your own peril; I declare againſt having any concern in the matter on ſuch a footing. Thus as the chief Prieſt and Elders had taken it ſo very ill, that Chriſt ſhould, in their opinion, be wanting in his reſpect to the Sanhedrim (*r*); ſo Pilate is no leſs offended, that they ſhould ſhew ſo little reſpect to him, and the Roman laws.

Fourthly, The evaſive excuſe of the Jews, who made anſwer, ‘ It is not lawful for us ‘ to put any man to death.’ They pretend that they dare not put any one to death; and yet they had ſhed the blood of all the Prophets (*s*). But they falſely concluded, that if their hands were not the immediate inſtrument of it, all was well, and that they were not guilty of a breach of the ſixth Commandment. They did not conſider that they put Jeſus to death with their envenomed tongues; that they had bribed a traitor to betray the innocent

(*r*) John xviii. 22. (*s*) Luke xi. 50, 51.

blood;

blood; that they had ſuborned falſe witneſſes againſt him; and laſtly, that by repeated clamours, and tumultuous outcries they were reſolved to prevail on Pilate to ratify and execute their ſentence. Infamous hypocrites! who, in our days, are not without many brethren in iniquity. How often do the wicked, even when the oppreſſion of the good has been reſolved upon, make a mighty ſhew of a conſcientious impartiality, as if they had no manner of hand in theſe unhappy affairs, and were much concerned on the account? But none are more expert in theſe hypocritical practices than the infamous engines of Antichriſt. St John, in the Revelation, repreſents the falſe church as drunk with the blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jeſus (*t*) *; yet is it a maxim among the Popiſh clergy, That the church ſheds no blood; whereas it inſtigates the civil power to employ the ſword againſt ſuppoſed heretics, who oppoſe its idolatrous worſhip.

Moreover, there is a diſpute concerning the import of theſe words of the Jewiſh Prieſts and Elders; namely, whether the Jews were at that time, totally deprived of the privilege of trying capital caſes? or whether they ſtill retained it with certain limitations? This

(*t*) Rev. xvii. 6.

* Vide HENR. HEIDEGGERI Myſterium Babylonis magnæ, Diſſertat. XII. quæ *de perſecutionibus Babylonis adverſus ſanctos, veri Dei cultores, agit.*

con-

controverſy we ſhall, at preſent, wave *. However, ſince there are examples of the Jews having delivered up innocent perſons to death after our Saviour's crucifixion, as St. Stephen (*u*) and St. James, who were beheaded by the order of Herod King of the Jews; it is probable, that the power of puniſhing capitally ſuch crimes as concerned the Jewiſh nation, and againſt which their law denounced death, had not been wholly taken away from them, though it was clogged with many limitations. But as for crimes by which the tranquillity of the commonwealth was diſturbed, they came under the cognizance of the civil power, and conſequently the Roman governor puniſhed ſuch crimes according to the laws of the Empire. Probably, they might have an eye to this regulation when they ſaid, 'It is not lawful 'for us to put any man to death,' *i. e.* any one whoſe crimes are of a political nature, who ſtirs up ſedition, and endeavours to alienate the ſubjects from their obedience to the Roman Emperor. For theſe were the points they inſiſted on, when Pilate enquired into the grounds of their accuſation. According to their own law, they might have ſtoned Chriſt, as they had declared him a blaſphemer; that being the uſual puniſhment of blaſphemy. But

† *Vide* Jo. Sirbrandæ Diſſ. de ſtatu Judaeæ provinciæ. *Adde ſententiarum divortia, quæ recenſet* Wolfius, in Curis Philol. ad Joh. xviii. 31.

(*u*) Acts vii.

theſe

theſe conſcientious perſons were now afraid, that the ſtones might recoil on their own heads; for it appears from St. Luke, that, ſometime before (*x*), they had been afraid of being ſtoned by the people. Therefore to prevent the tumult, which they apprehended would be the conſequence of ſtoning the bleſſed Jeſus, it was thought more adviſable to make Pilate the inſtrument for the execution of the ſentence. But all theſe circumſtances did not come to paſs fortuitouſly; for

Fifthly, The counſel of God in this event is pointed out by St. John, who adds, (*y*) 'That the ſaying of Jeſus might be fulfilled, which he ſpake, ſignifying what death he ſhould die.' God, in his eternal decrees, had appointed that the redemption of the world ſhould be wrought by the death of the Croſs. This had not only been predicted by the Prophets, but declared by Chriſt himſelf (*z*); for he had plainly told his diſciples, that he was to be delivered up to the Gentiles, and to be crucified. This declaration of the Lord Jeſus, that his ſacred perſon was not to ſuffer immediately by them, tied up the hands of the Jewiſh rulers, by whom that painful ſort of puniſhment was not inflicted. St. John makes this obſervation for the confirmation of our faith; and ſhews how wiſely the counſel of God directed every particular circumſtance

(*x*) Luke xx. 6. (*y*) John xviii. 32.
(*z*) Matth. xx. 19. xxvi. 2. John xii. 32.

of

of our Saviour's paſſion, amidſt ſuch a medley of intricate proceedings carried on by Jews and Gentiles.

We ſhall conclude this Conſideration with the following practical obſervations.

1. The moſt profane and impious are uſually poſſeſſed with the ſtrongeſt aſſurance of their own infallibility.

Theſe unrighteous Judges were of the number of thoſe liars deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, who go aſtray from the womb (*a*); yet in their trial of Chriſt, they fancied themſelves inveſted with a certain infallibility of judging aright, and thought, like the enemies of the Prophet, that 'the law ſhould not periſh from 'the prieſt, nor counſel from the wiſe (*b*).' This privilege of infallibility is not only arrogantly claimed by the Pope, whoſe extravagant pride would be thought above committing any error, or being ſubject to any miſtake in his decrees *; but the moſt abandoned men alſo frequently pretend to the ſame unerring judgment. How few, indeed, are there, who will own that they have acted amiſs, or committed a crime? Every one, though his guilt be as glaring as the noon-day, is for juſtifying, or at leaſt excuſing, his actions. This

(*a*) Pſalm lviii. 3.

(*b*) Jer. xviii. 18.

* Vide HENR. HEIDEGGERI Myſterium Babylonis diſſ. VIII. ſect. II. §. 34. *et* diſſ. XI. ſect. I. §. 21 ſeqq. *et* BUDDEI diſſ. de fallibili Pontificis Romani In allibilitate.

is

is a depravity which added to the ſufferings of Chriſt, who was condemned by ſuch hypocritical judges. Here let us enter into ourſelves, and conſider whether we alſo are blinded with ſuch a perverſe ſelf-love, as to account every thing we do right and juſt, though it be at the ſame time directly contrary to God's Word. Let us humbly acknowledge this ſinful conceit of the rectitude of our own actions, which is one of the greateſt impediments to a true repentance and ſincere converſion. Let us, with holy Job, 'lay our hand to our mouth, and ceaſe 'from juſtifying ourſelves before God:' Let us ſeek the forgiveneſs of this corrupt principle by the blood of Chriſt, and open our hearts to the influences of his Spirit.

2. That he, who had fulfilled all righteouſneſs, ſhould ſuffer himſelf to be ſentenced to die as a malefactor, is an unſpeakable comfort to thoſe who, in their conſciences, know themſelves to be evil-doers.

The benevolent Son of God, who hitherto 'had gone about doing good (*c*),' and of whom the people, with juſt acclamations of applauſe, had ſaid, 'He has done all things well (*d*)', here permits himſelf to be brought before the judge as a malefactor *, and to ſuffer by the

(*c*) Acts x. 38. (*d*) Mark vii. 37.

* Κακοποιος *nonnumquam ſpeciatim ſignificat* facinoroſum, *pœnâ capitali dignum*, 2 Pet. iv. 15. *et qui velut habitum in malefaciendo contraxit.* Syrus *reddit: Si non eſſet hic* ſervus *vel* operator iniquitatis.

ſword

ſword of the civil power. Never would this ſurpriſing event have come to paſs, had not our ſins been the occaſion of it. The human race was ſunk into ſuch an abyſs of depravation, that God, 'when he looked down 'from heaven, found not one that did good, 'no not one (*e*).' Thus ſhould we all have been brought as malefactors before the judgement-ſeat of God, and ſentenced to eternal death. But the only-begotten, the beloved Son of the Father, here ſtood in the place of evil-doers, and bore the ſhame and puniſhment due to their ſins, that we might be acquitted at the tribunal of God, and be put in a capacity of doing good, and avoiding every evil work. Whoſoever therefore is convinced that he has hitherto been an evil-doer, and is ſincerely grieved and heartily ſorry for his miſdoings, let him believe on Him, who, for his ſake, was numbered among the tranſgreſſors; and let him give himſelf up to be governed by his Holy Spirit. But woe to thoſe who will continue in their evil doings! for what can they expect but the juſt ſentence of the ſupreme Judge of the world, 'Depart from me, ye 'that work iniquity (*f*)!'

3. Hypocrites generally bring an odium on the true religion.

We have already obſerved what an ironical anſwer Pilate returned the Jews, 'Take ye

(*e*) Pſalm xiv. 3. (*f*) Matth. vii. 23.

'him and judge him according to your law:' As if he had ſaid, You make ſuch a boaſt of your law, as if it was more perfect than the laws of all other nations; but if your law allows of putting a man to death, before it hears what he has to ſay for himſelf, our Roman law is far preferable, which admits of no ſuch unjuſt practices. Thus what St. Paul ſays of the Jews was here verified, 'Thou that makeſt 'thy boaſt of the law, through breaking the 'law diſhonoureſt thou God? for the name of 'God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles 'through you (*g*).' The law, which God was pleaſed to give to the Jews, by no means permitted that any one ſhould be condemned without a fair trial; nay, a capital ſentence could not be paſſed on a criminal upon the depoſition of one ſingle witneſs (*h*). Hence Nicodemus aſks this queſtion: 'Doth our law judge any 'man before it hear him, and know what 'he doeth?' But as the Jews, in this inſtance, importunately urge Pilate to order Jeſus to be crucified without any previous examination; this raiſed in him a ſuſpicion that their law allowed of ſuch an iniquitous proceeding. This is always the concluſion that is drawn by the world from the behaviour of hypocrites; who caſt a blemiſh on true religion, by making a ſtrong outward profeſſion of it, without ever obeying its divine precepts from the heart. This ſin is the more dreadful as it generally

(*g*) Rom. ii. 23. (*h*) Deut. xvii. 6. xix. 15.

gives

gives great offence by caſting an odium on the true profeſſors of religion, and cauſes the way of the Lord to be evil ſpoken of; and therefore we ought to deteſt and abhor ſuch hypocritical practices.

4. The providence of God, which over-ruled the circumſtances that attended our bleſſed Saviour's paſſion, likewiſe directs whatever befalls us in life and death.

The enemies of Chriſt could not move a ſtep farther, than the Divine Providence permitted them. They could not act juſt as their malice prompted them; but all the circumſtances of our bleſſed Lord's trial were directed by the predetermined wiſe counſel, and immutable decree of God. In vain did they endeavour at Nazareth to precipitate the bleſſed Jeſus down the rock (*i*); in vain did the impious Jews attempt to ſtone him (*k*); and in vain was it that Pilate ſaid, 'Take ye him, and 'judge him according to your law.' The manner of our Saviour's death was exactly to correſpond with the predictions of the Prophets, and the previous declarations of the Lord Jeſus himſelf. Satan and his engines in this whole affair acted, indeed, according to the impulſe of their own wicked and malicious minds; yet the Divine Wiſdom ſo reſtrained, guided, and conducted, every part of this important tranſaction agreeably to the unchangeable purpoſe of God. Hence many things fell out contrary

(*i*) Luke iv. 29. (*k*) John viii. 59.

to the deſigns and wiſhes of the enemies of Chriſt. It is therefore ſaid in Scripture, 'Truly the Son of Man goeth as it was de-'termined (*l*).' The ſame Providence which accompanied our bleſſed Saviour from his birth to his death, will alſo direct all contingences through life for our good, and be our guide unto death, if we will but entirely reſign ourſelves up to God's diſpoſal. Let us therefore ceaſe from intruding on God's government, and commit all our ways to him only; and then we ſhall happily experience, that every thing happens here below, not according to the reſolutions of our enemies, but according to the determination of eternal Wiſdom and infinite Love.

THE PRAYER.

AND now, O faithful and ever-living God, bleſſed be thy holy name for permitting thy beloved Son to fall into the hands of wicked men, who led him as an evil-doer before unrighteous judges, that ſentence of death might be pronounced on him. Give us, we beſeech thee, ſuch an edifying knowledge of the myſteries of impiety and wickedneſs which attended this great event, that all of us may from it draw thoſe benefits which are neceſſary to their reſpective circumſtances. Bleſs that part of thy ſacred Word which we have now

(*l*) Luke xxii. 22.

diſ-

diſcuſſed; imprint on all our hearts the important truths that have been drawn from it; and by thy Good Spirit, remind us again of them at a proper ſeaſon. Grant this for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

CONSIDERATION V.

The firſt examination of our bleſſed Saviour before the civil tribunal of Pontius Pilate *the* Roman *Governor.*

'(a) AND Jeſus ſtood before the Gover-
'nor. And they began to accuſe
'him, ſaying, We found this fellow pervert-
'ing the nation, and forbidding to give tri-
'bute to Cæſar, ſaying, that he himſelf is
'Chriſt a King. Then Pilate entered into
'the judgment-hall again, and called Jeſus,
'and aſked him, ſaying, Art thou the King
'of the Jews? Jeſus anſwered him, Sayeſt thou
'this thing of thyſelf, or did others tell it
'thee of me? Pilate anſwered, Am I a Jew?
'thine own nation, and the chief Prieſts have
'delivered thee unto me: What haſt thou
'done?

(a) Matth. xxvii. 11. Mark xv. 2. Luke xxiii. 2, 3. John xviii. 33, 34, 35.

In theſe words we have an account of the firſt enquiry into our Saviour's cauſe before the civil tribunal of Pontius Pilate; and herein we may obſerve,

Firſt, The charge preferred againſt him by his enemies.

Secondly, The behaviour of the Judge.

I.

As to the charge preferred by our bleſſed Lord's enemies, it is ſaid, 'And Jeſus ſtood 'before the Governor. And they began to 'accuſe him, ſaying, We have found this fel-'low perverting the nation, *&c.*'

At firſt, the enemies of Chriſt were diſpleaſed with Pilate, becauſe he did not immediately believe their aſſertion, that Jeſus was guilty, and that he ſhould take upon him to enquire into the nature of the accuſation brought againſt him. But when they found, that the affair was not likely to come to ſo ſpeedy an iſſue as they expected, they were under a neceſſity of urging their accuſation againſt Jeſus in the moſt preſſing manner. Here we are to obſerve,

Firſt, The perſon accuſed.

Secondly, The accuſation brought againſt him.

The perſon accuſed is thus deſcribed: 'And 'Jeſus ſtood before the Governor.' After Pilate, at the requeſt of the Jews, was gone out

of the hall of judgment to confer with them, they preſented Jeſus to him, bound as a malefactor. Thus he, who is to judge the quick and the dead, here ſtood before his judge. He who, but a little before, had ſaid to the High Prieſt, 'Hereafter ſhall the Son of Man ſit 'on the right hand of the power of God (*b*),' here ſtands before Pilate as a criminal. At ſuch an immenſe price has grace been purchaſed for us, that we might ſtand acquitted before the awful tribunal of God. A perſon of ſuch exalted, ſuch a glorious character, and tranſcendent merit, permitted himſelf to be confronted with malicious accuſers before an unrighteous judge, that we might obtain boldneſs to ſtand before the righteous Judge, and our accuſers be aſhamed and confounded.

However, St. Matthew, by theſe words, 'Jeſus ſtood before the Governor,' intended not only to denote the outward poſture of our bleſſed Saviour's body, but alſo the inward frame and diſpoſition of his mind. When Chriſt was in the garden of Gethſemanè praying to his heavenly Father, he proſtrated himſelf before him on his face, in order to obtain favour for us backſliders, by his lowly and filial humiliation. But here, though it was the firſt time he appeared before his temporal judge, we read of no proſtrations, no tears or lamentations, no intreaties for mercy, no ſupplications to ſpare his life; but he ſtood firm,

(*b*) Luke xxii. 69.

ſerene, and undaunted, as one who was perfectly conſcious of the juſtice of his cauſe, and aſſured of the Divine aſſiſtance. How ſtrange and unaccountable muſt this ſpectacle have appeared, that the King of Iſrael ſhould ſtand like a criminal before a heathen governor, and that the Creator of all things, who from eternity is highly exalted above all, ſhould ſtand in this contemptible manner before his creature? But all this was long before known to the Lord Jeſus, by his omniſcience. Hence our bleſſed Lord ſhewed in this inſtance a wonderful preſence of mind; and by his majeſtic firmneſs, ſet his wavering judge an example, that he alſo ſhould ſtand unmoved as a rock, and not ſuffer his reſolution to be ſhaken, like a reed, by the breath of popular clamours, and the impetuous cries of his malicious enemies. This is the repreſentation given us by the Evangeliſt of the perſon accuſed.

The accuſation urged againſt our bleſſed Saviour is related by St. Luke; and therein we ſhall conſider,

1. The purport of the charge. And

2. The manner in which it was preferred.

1. The ſubſtance of the accuſation was this: 'We found this fellow, ſaid they, perverting 'the nation, and forbidding to give tribute 'to Cæſar, ſaying, that he himſelf is Chriſt 'a King.' Theſe words ſeem to contain a three-

three-fold crime, with which our bleſſed Saviour is charged by his enemies.

The firſt is, That he perverts and ſeduces the people, drawing them away from the ancient Moſaic religion, and perplexing their minds by his confuſed and falſe doctrine.

The ſecond crime charged on our bleſſed Lord is, That he forbids the Jews to pay tribute to Cæſar, and conſequently alienates the minds of the Jewiſh people from their obedience to the Roman Emperor, whoſe ſubjects they were.

The third crime with which our bleſſed Saviour is accuſed by the chief Prieſts is, That he gives himſelf out to be the Meſſiah, and the King of the Jews.

By the firſt part of the charge, their deſign is to repreſent the Lord Jeſus as an Hereſiarch, a falſe prophet, and tranſgreſſor of the Divine Law. By the ſecond crime laid to his charge, they make him to be a promoter of ſedition, and a rebellious perſon that violated the law of Nature and Nations, which requires every ſubject to contribute ſome part of his property to the government, in return for the ſecurity he enjoys under the protection of the Civil Power. By the third part of the accuſation, they would ſet him out as a declared uſurper, a tranſgreſſor of the Roman law, aſſuming the title of King of the Jews, to the prejudice of the ſovereign of the country, and

thus fomenting diſcord and rebellion in the ſtate.

It appears that the enemies of Chriſt had very induſtriouſly multiplied his pretended crimes, that, in caſe they ſhould fail in the proof of any one of them, they might have other crimes at hand, on which they might ground another indictment.

However, as Pilate was a civil governor and a lay ſtateſman, who gave himſelf no concern about the Jewiſh religion, and conſequently would pay little regard to the charge of hereſy, it is the more probable that the whole of their accuſation centred in the charge of rebellion. By this, they deſigned to arraign our bleſſed Lord as a ſeditious perſon, who withdrew the people from their allegiance to the Roman Emperor. To this end, they adduced for a proof of it, that he forbad the Jews to pay the impoſed tribute to the Roman government, and that he even enjoined them to pay it to him, as being the lawful King of the Jews. They concluded that Pilate would be extremely incenſed at this; he being appointed by the Roman Emperor to ſuperintend what related to his intereſt, and to keep a watchful eye over any appearance of ſedition or tumult among the Jews. However, all theſe allegations were a heap of notorious falſities, for which they could bring no manner of proof. This was the ſubſtance of the charge brought againſt

againſt our bleſſed Lord by the malicious Jews.

2. The way and manner, in which they preferred this charge againſt Jeſus, is contained in theſe words: 'We found this fellow perverting the people.' Thus they couched their accuſation in terms, that expreſſed the moſt virulent contempt of the ſacred perſon of our Lord, not deigning ſo much as to mention his name, but ſaying only 'This fellow;' and likewiſe the greateſt audaciouſneſs and effrontery, 'We found this fellow.' They ſpoke with ſuch confidence, as if they would be thought to have ſurpriſed our Saviour in the very fact, in the actual execution of his ſeditious deſigns, or at leaſt, as if upon enquiry and due examination, they had found him notoriouſly guilty of having carried on rebellious practices. Some are of opinion, that the chief Prieſts and Elders cauſed the words contained in the charge, to be proclaimed by a herald before all the people, both in the Jewiſh and Latin languages, that Pilate, who was a Roman, might be acquainted with the accuſation brought againſt Jeſus *. If that was the caſe, the promulgation of theſe lies the more expoſed their conſummate effrontery and hardened conſciences.

* Latinâ *linguâ etiam Pilatum in hâc cauſâ uſum eſſe, adeóque per interpretem cum Jeſu et Judæis egiſſe, evincere ſtudet* CL. TOB. EKHARDUS, *in* Miſcell. Lipſ. Tom. XI. p. 21.

Hence

Hence we may deduce the following doctrines.

1. It is the way of hypocrites to charge the faithful ſervants of God with thoſe crimes, which they themſelves are deeply infected with.

The teachers of the Jews were, at that time, themſelves guilty of all the faults which they lay to the charge of our bleſſed Saviour. They were the perſons, who alienated the people from the true religion and ſervice of God, and perverted their minds, by enjoining in its ſtead the vain traditions and trifling ordinances of men (*c*). They were the perſons, who by their pernicious doctrines, fomented the ſeditious inclination of the Jewiſh people; for they made it a ſubject of diſpute in their ſynagogues or ſchools, Whether the tribute impoſed on them by the Roman Emperor was conſiſtent with the freedom of the people of God? Laſtly, they were the perſons, who inſtilled into the minds of the people the ideas and expectations of an earthly temporal kingdom of the Meſſiah, who was to be a puiſſant prince; and conſequently, they themſelves were guilty of all the crimes which they laid to the charge of the Lord Jeſus.

This is the practice of wicked men, even in the preſent time. Thoſe who are the moſt deteſtable hypocrites, and make the greateſt ſhow of ſanctity, are moſt apt to charge thoſe who

(*c*) Matth. xv. 4.

are

are ſincerely deſirous of turning to God, or are already converted, with hypocriſy and diſſimulation. The moſt abandoned ſons of darkneſs, the moſt flagitious ſinners, who veil their enormous crimes from the eye of the world, in order to preſerve their credit and reputation, uſually give the name of diſſemblers and hypocrites to perſons of real piety and virtue. Thoſe men, who in all things ſeek their own honour and advantage, are the moſt virulent in accuſing the ſervants of God of entertaining ambitious and ſelfiſh views. They, whoſe practices are diametrically oppoſite to the pattern of the ſalutary doctrines of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, make it moſt their buſineſs to charge others with hereſy, and arraign them as perſons guilty of all kinds of pernicious errors. They whoſe affections are entirely ſet upon this world, and whoſe minds are engroſſed by avarice, are loudeſt in their complaints of the avarice and diſhoneſty of others, *&c.* Thus was this depravity of the human heart likewiſe to ſhew itſelf, and be made manifeſt in the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt. The Mediator even felt the effects of this corruption of human nature on his ſacred perſon, that by theſe painful ſenſations, he might acquire for us the remiſſion of diſſimulation and hypocriſy, if duly repented of in time.

2. The moſt innocent and irreproachable behaviour is not ſufficient to ſecure a good man againſt the envenomed darts of calumny and falſe accuſations.

What

What could our bleſſed Saviour do more than he had done, to avoid the leaſt ſuſpicion of rebellion and ſeditious practices? When the people were for laying hold of him, in order to make him a king, as it were by force, he fled from them (*d*). Nay, he even paid the tribute money for himſelf and Peter (*e*); and when, about four days before his paſſion, he was aſked, Whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæſar or not, he returned this plain anſwer, 'Render to Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's, 'and to God the things which are God's.' Even his very enemies could not make the leaſt exception againſt this wiſe deciſion in ſo enſnaring a diſpute; but were aſtoniſhed at his anſwer, and went away without ſaying a word (*f*). But all this caution was not ſufficient to ſecure our bleſſed Saviour from the falſe imputation of entertaining rebellious deſigns; for, notwithſtanding all theſe appearances of the moſt reſigned ſubmiſſion to the civil Power, his enemies now charge him with perverting the people, forbidding them to pay tribute, and ſetting himſelf up for a king. If the great Captain of our ſalvation, our ever-glorious Head was thus baſely treated, his members can certainly expect no better treatment from his and their inveterate enemies. Therefore, be of good courage, all ye that are determined to follow Chriſt as your Leader,

(*d*) John vi. 15. (*e*) Matth. xvii. 17.
(*f*) Luke xx. 26.

and

and to walk innocently and unblameably amidſt a perverſe and wicked generation among whom ye live! Be aſſured, that all theſe precautions will not abſolutely ſecure you againſt calumny, lies, and ſlanderous imputations: However, think not ſuch treatment ſtrange or uncommon; but comfort yourſelves, ſince your bleſſed Chief was thus alſo treated, and be content in this alſo to be made like unto the Firſtborn among many brethren, whom Chriſt will tranſlate into his glorious kingdom.

3. Whoever ſuppoſes that, when all manner of evil is ſpoken againſt the good and virtuous, there muſt be ſome ground for ſuch accuſations, is diſpoſed to condemn Chriſt and his innocent members.

It is a common practice with nominal Chriſtians, when any ill reports are ſpread abroad to the prejudice of pious men, to give out that there muſt be ſomething in it; that people would not otherwiſe talk ſo freely and openly; that they are things which would have never come into any one's head to invent; that what all the world ſays muſt be true, *&c.* On this the ſpirit of ſlander relies, and induſtriouſly ſpreads all kind of falſe reports, and ſuch as often have not a ſhadow of probability, well knowing that there will be people either credulous or ſpiteful enough to believe and propagate them. Thus it throws calumnies and lies about the more boldly, being confident that ſome will ſtick on, and ſully the reputation of the envied perſon. In the

the preſent inſtance, all the Jewiſh Rulers openly defamed and calumniated the bleſſed Jeſus, who was the moſt innocent among the children of men. They openly accuſed him of aiming at the regal power, and forbidding to pay tribute to Cæſar. But was there any ſhadow of truth in this accuſation? Was it not a moſt flagrant lye, hatched in their own brains? O that men would more attentively reflect on the wiſe ſaying of the Son of Sirach: Many times it is a ſlander, and believe not every tale (*g*)*. The ſource of this depravity is nothing elſe but enmity againſt Chriſt and his members. Let us therefore examine ourſelves, and aſk our own hearts, Whether we are inclined to believe any evil report concerning a great but wicked man, whoſe favour has been of ſervice to us? Alas! in ſuch a caſe, we are far from being over-credulous, and we withhold our aſſent while there is but the leaſt appearance of truth againſt it, to keep us in countenance. How comes it to paſs then, that we are ſo ready to believe the very worſt calumnies, and the moſt ſcandalous reports of the faithful ſervants and followers of Chriſt? In ſuch perſons is verified that ſaying of Solomon: 'A wicked doer giveth heed to

(*g*) Eccluſ. xix. 15.

* Famane tunc quidem, quum aliquid veri affert, ſine mendacii vitio eſt; detrahens, adjiciens, demutans de veritate. An verò famæ credat, niſi inconſideratus? TERTULLIANUS in Apologetico, C. vii.

'falſe

'falſe lips, and a liar giveth ear to a naughty 'tongue (*h*).'

4. The ſufferings of the bleſſed Jeſus, in patiently bearing falſe accuſations, is a ſpring of great comfort to his faithful ſervants.

For by this part of his ſufferings, Chriſt has, *firſt*, expiated our fall, and the depravity propagated in us from our firſt parents. We have naturally an evil refractory heart, which is full of rebellion againſt God and our lawful ſuperiors. We have not only in our minds turned aſide from God to Satan; but have, as it were, thrown the whole creation into diſorder, and ſubjected it to vanity (*i*). We have refuſed to pay the tribute of gratitude and obedience, which we owe to our indulgent Creator, and are likewiſe inclined to ſhake off the yoke of allegiance to the civil Powers, and to defraud them of the tribute due to them (*k*) by all manner of illegal means, and clandeſtine practices. We have ſeated our obſtinate ſelf-will on the royal Throne; we have paid homage to it, and refuſed the fidelity and ſubmiſſion due to our lawful and Sovereign Lord. We all, by nature, hanker after greatneſs; we are inflamed with ambition and inflated with pride, and would rather command others than be ſubject to lawful authority. All theſe our falſely accuſed Mediator has expiated, if we ſincerely repent of them, and believe in his name. He

(*h*) Prov. xvii. 4. (*i*) Rom. viii. 2.
(*k*) Rom. xiii. 7.

has

has alſo, by patiently bearing theſe falſe accuſations and unjuſt calumnies, atoned for our unjuſt complaints againſt God, and the diſpenſations of his Providence.

On the other hand, he has, *ſecondly*, acquired for us an exemption from the guilt charged on us by our malicious accuſer and inveterate enemy, Satan, who will bring innumerable accuſations againſt us, ſome true, and ſome falſe, before the Tribunal of God. Now that the tempter, and at the ſame time accuſer, of mankind may be diſappointed, Chriſt has ſuffered the waves of falſe accuſations to paſs over his head, while he ſtood unmoved as a rock, amidſt their foaming rage and boiſterous fury.

He has, *thirdly*, by this part of his ſufferings, ſanctified the ſufferings of his faithful ſervants, who are often exclaimed againſt and calumniated by the children of the world, (eſpecially by thoſe of Herodian minds, who in fact exalt the civil power above God himſelf) as a rebellious, turbulent, and ſeditious ſet of men; becauſe they cannot blindly ſubmit to the vain ordinances of men, in matters which affect their own conſciences and the honour of God, but adhere to the Apoſtles rule, *viz.* 'We 'ought to obey God rather than men.' Upon ſuch occaſions, they muſt expect to be accuſed, that they pervert the people; that they trample on the authority, and deſpiſe the edicts, of the Magiſ-

Magiſtrate, and diſturb the public tranquillity (*m*).

Let us therefore give thanks and praiſe to our faithful Saviour and Redeemer, for ſubmitting to ſuch falſe accuſations, and by that means opening for us ſuch an abundant ſource of comfort. But let us ſhew forth our gratitude, not only in mere words, but alſo in a willing readineſs to undergo any calumny or falſe accuſation for his ſake. On the contrary, let us be extremely cautious, that we neither raiſe nor countenance any falſe report againſt others, nor, by ſeditious and rebellious practices, bring a reproach on the peaceable doctrines of the Goſpel of Chriſt. Having thus treated on the accuſation charged on our bleſſed Lord by his enemies, we now proceed to conſider

II.

The behaviour of his judge. It ſeems he conferred with the party accuſed: 'Then Pi-'late entered into the judgment-hall again, 'and called Jeſus, and aſked him, ſaying, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' In this behaviour of Pilate, there are many things which deſerve commendation: He is to be commended for obſerving that equitable rule of hearing both ſides. He is to be commended, becauſe he examines into the affair

(*m*) Compare 1 Kings xviii. 17. Jer. xxxviii. 4. Acts xxiv. 5.

himſelf, and does not ſhift off the trouble by appointing others to report the caſe to him. Laſtly, He is to be commended for examining our bleſſed Lord by himſelf, in the judgment-hall, about the charge alledged againſt him, that every thing might be conducted the more peaceably, and with greater privacy and order; and that Jeſus might the ſooner be induced to confeſs the whole truth to him. So far, indeed, Pilate is to be commended, and his conduct is to be approved. However, after all this parade of impartiality and juſtice, the innocent is condemned to ſuffer. This has been the caſe in the trial of ſeveral martyrs. The indictments were uſually read, the parties accuſed were examined, and allowed to make their defence; but generally they were to be very ſhort in their apologies; for, in ſuch caſes, the world is ſoon out of patience. At laſt, however, after many interrogations, enſnaring queſtions, and pertinent anſwers, they were led to the ſtake: And no wonder, ſince the diſciple is not above his Maſter.

Moreover, in this diſcourſe which Pilate had with Chriſt, we ſhall take notice, *firſt*, of Pilate's queſtion, *ſecondly*, of our bleſſed Lord's queſtion to Pilate, and *thirdly*, of Pilate's anſwer to Jeſus.

Firſt, Pilate's queſtion is comprehended in theſe words, 'Art thou the King of the 'Jews?' Thus the Governor inſiſted on the laſt article of the accuſation, as all the reſt were

in-

included in it. He could not but know that the Jews expected a Meſſiah, who, as a king and conqueror, was to deliver them from all foreign dominion, to ſubject other nations to them, and to procure them a ſuperabundant affluence of all earthly bleſſings. Of this expectation of the Jews, as he had now been for ſome years Governor of Judea, he could not be ignorant. He was therefore for knowing, in the firſt place, whether Jeſus was that Meſſiah, or triumphant Prince, whom the Jews expected; ſince the truth of the other parts of the accuſation depended on the proof of this point. For if our bleſſed Saviour had owned that he was a temporal King of the Jews, Pilate would have thought it very natural for him to uſe ſome endeavours to gain the affections of his ſubjects, and that he would conſequently attempt to alienate their minds, and withdraw their allegiance from the Roman Emperor; and then the refuſal of paying the cuſtomary tribute to the Roman Government, would have followed of courſe.

It appears alſo that Pilate put this queſtion to Jeſus with ſome degree of ſurprize, 'Art 'Thou the King of the Jews?' As if he had ſaid, It is what one would little think from thy outward appearance, thy bonds, thy fetters, *&c.* it is what I ſhould have never imagined. This, indeed, is generally the way of the great and wiſe of this world. They judge of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt from its external

figure; and as they find in it no outward pomp or ſplendor, no worldly ſtate, they are ſo blinded with pride, that they deſpiſe and revile it.

But what an aſtoniſhing abaſement is this, that the King of Kings, of whom all monarchs hold their temporal crowns, ſhould here ſubmit his regal dignity to be called in queſtion! This is what the ſovereigns of the earth, of all things are the leaſt able to bear; for to diſpute their right to the crown is, as it were, touching the apple of their eye. On the contrary, with what humility of mind does the Lord of lords here ſuffer himſelf to be queſtioned on this point! This voluntary humiliation of the Lord of Glory ſhould ſhame our arrogance, and be a powerful preſervative againſt pride, and immoderate ambition. So much did it coſt our bleſſed Redeemer to acquire for us, miſerable ſlaves of Satan, the honour of being made kings and prieſts to God, his heavenly Father! Unexampled condeſcenſion! Adorable love!

Secondly, Before this queſtion of Pilate was anſwered by the Lord Jeſus, He, in return, calmly puts another queſtion to Pilate in theſe words: 'Sayeſt thou this thing of thyſelf, or 'did others tell it thee of me?' As if he had ſaid, Have you hitherto obſerved in me or my behaviour in Jeruſalem, any thing which could raiſe in you a well-grounded ſuſpicion, that I attempt to make myſelf King of Judea, or to ſeduce the people from their obedience to the

Romans? Or, have others who are my enemies informed you of this, without giving any proof of their allegation; and by their exalted character ſo far impoſed on your judgment, that you are not averſe from believing it out of complaiſance to them? This ſeems to be the meaning of this queſtion, put by our bleſſed Saviour to the Roman Governor.

By this queſtion, our bleſſed Lord gives his judge a tacit hint, that he does not ſcrupulouſly adhere to the rules of equity and juſtice. For, in the firſt place, it was not very juſt in Pilate, to proceed to interrogate the priſoner on the bare accuſation of the Jews, unſupported by any legal proofs, aud without once aſking them, on what they grounded their charge againſt him. For if merely to accuſe a perſon be ſufficient to convict him, Who can ever be ſafe, and ſecure from malice? It was likewiſe a wrong proceeding in Pilate to refer to the declaration of the party accuſed the truth of a fact, which ought to have been proved by witneſſes; for, in the common method of proceeding, no party can be an evidence in his own cauſe. Laſtly, Pilate acted amiſs in entering upon the trial of the pretended criminal, in compliance to the deſire of his enemies, before he had a right knowledge of the nature of the charge, and had ordered the accuſers explicitly to tell him, what ſort of a King the party accuſed pretended to be. Now as Pilate acted wrong in ſo many reſpects at the very beginning of the exami-

nation, our bleſſed Saviour here means to give him a hint of the nature and duty of his office.

By this double queſtion, our bleſſed Lord alſo endeavours to clear up the ambiguity of Pilate's queſtion, *viz.* 'Art thou the King of 'the Jews?' and by that means, opens a way for the good confeſſion he afterwards made concerning the true nature of his kingdom. The Meſſiah had, indeed, in the writings of the Prophets, been ever repreſented as the King of Iſrael. 'Thus ſaith the Lord, the King of 'Iſrael, and his Redeemer (*n*). The King of 'Iſrael, even the Lord is in the midſt of 'thee (*o*). Shout, O Daughter of Jeruſalem, 'behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *&c.* (*p*)' Hence it was that even the Eaſtern Magi, or Wiſe men from the Eaſt, when they enquired after our Saviour, ſaid, 'Where is he that is 'born King of the Jews (*q*)?' But Pilate, who was a ſtranger to the writings of the Prophets, could certainly by the title of King of the Jews underſtand no other than a temporal Sovereign. Jeſus therefore enquires, Whether Pilate ſpoke this of himſelf, and gave him the title of King of the Jews in a political ſenſe? or, whether the Jews had ſuggeſted this to him, who were under the higheſt obligation to form their idea of the King of the

(*n*) Iſaiah xliv. 6. (*o*) Zaph. iii. 15.
(*p*) Zac. ix. 9. (*q*) Matth. ii. 2.

Jews

Jews according to the prophetic writings, and conſequently whether he meant a ſpiritual King?

Now our bleſſed Lord, by giving Pilate a hint to keep cloſer to the rules of juſtice and equity, gave a proof of his undaunted firmneſs and magnanimity; and by his endeavour to clear the queſtion from confuſion, he gave a proof of his Divine Wiſdom; for he firſt removes all obſcurity and ambiguity from the queſtion, before he returns an anſwer to it. If he had directly anſwered in the negative to the queſtion, Art thou the King of the Jews? it would have looked, as if he was not that King of Iſrael, whoſe coming had been predicted in Scripture by the Prophets; and if he had, without adding any illuſtration, anſwered in the affirmative, it might have been concluded that he had ſet up for a temporal King of the Jews, by which he would have unneceſſarily irritated Pilate. To prevent both theſe bad conſequences, before our bleſſed Saviour makes his confeſſion, he is for ſettling the right ſenſe and meaning of the queſtion put to him by Pilate. Hereupon follows,

Thirdly, Pilate's anſwer to our Saviour's queſtion is this, 'Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, 'and the Chief Prieſts have delivered thee 'unto me: What haſt thou done?' By which

1. Pilate ſhews that he was diſpleaſed at the queſtion which Jeſus had put to him, by theſe words, Am I a Jew? As if he had ſaid, What have I, who am a ſtateſman, to do with the

wranglings of the Jews among themſelves about religion? It is no concern of mine to know what King they may expect? I have more important buſineſs on my hands than to read their books, and enquire into ſuch ſuperſtitions. In this queſtion alſo appears both his contempt of the Jewiſh nation, which the Jews had partly brought on themſelves by their profligate manner of living; and likewiſe his contempt of the Jewiſh and true religion. It was alſo accompanied with a good deal of pride and haughtineſs, for Pilate looked upon it as a great ſcandal to be a Jew; and that Chriſt, who was a Jew, ſhould have the boldneſs to put ſuch a queſtion to him, was what he could not digeſt. Theſe faults are ſtill too frequently ſeen in many politicians and ſtateſmen, who look upon the moſt important and fundamental truths of the Chriſtian religion, as nothing but theological altercations; and, under the pretence of being no Divines, ſpeak of religion with an indifferent levity, and believe juſt according to their own fancy and ignorance of divine things.

2. Pilate here diſcovers thoſe who had put him upon aſking this queſtion, by ſaying, 'Thine 'own people and the Chief Prieſts have deli-'vered thee unto me.' As if he had ſaid, For my part, thou mighteſt have gone all over Judea, preaching and teaching, without any moleſtation from me. But thine own nation, and the moſt venerable and learned among thy people,

people, *viz.* the Chief Prieſts, who themſelves expect a King and Meſſiah, have brought thee hither, and accuſe thee of having given thyſelf out to be a King.

3. Upon this, Pilate aſks, 'What haſt thou 'done?' Thou muſt, at leaſt, have dropped ſome words, which have given a handle for ſuch an accuſation; or thou muſt have very much offended the people, and by ſome flagitious crime or other, drawn their hatred on thyſelf.

Thus Pilate thought that there muſt be ſome cauſe behind the curtain, quite different from what was alledged againſt Jeſus, which he was artfully for coming at by this queſtion, What haſt thou done? The anſwer, which our bleſſed Lord made to this laſt queſtion, we ſhall diſcuſs at large in the following Conſideration. In the mean time, from the words which we have explained, we may learn the following truths.

1. Chriſt's magnanimity and prudence, in his behaviour towards Pilate, is a great comfort to his ſuffering members.

Pilate had here before him a perſon of tranſcendent dignity, who was ſenſible of his ſpotleſs innocence and the juſtice of his cauſe. The priſoner therefore might juſtly preſume to put the Roman governor, who was his judge, in mind of his ſtation; to inſtruct him in the obſervance of the rules of juſtice and equity; and to give him to underſtand, that inſtead of be-

ing impoſed upon by an ambiguous charge, he ought to have taken care to be rightly informed of the nature and true meaning of the accuſation brought before him. All theſe intimations proceeded from the Spirit of fortitude and ſtrength, with which the human nature of the Lord Jeſus was abundantly anointed. Though Chriſt, in this particular, has an infinite pre-eminence above all his companions (*r*); yet he will graciouſly impart to his perſecuted members as much of this magnanimity, and undaunted firmneſs, which was here diſplayed to the Roman governor, as he ſees proper for their ſeveral conditions. Let no Chriſtian, therefore, however timorous and fearful he is by nature, deſpond, and ſay within himſelf, Alas! ſhould perſecution ariſe for the ſake of Truth, if it ſhould be my caſe to be brought before magiſtrates, councils, and courts of judicature, to give an anſwer of the reaſon of the hope that is in me, I am afraid, that I ſhall greatly prejudice the cauſe of God. I ſay, let none give way to ſuch deſponding thoughts; for Jeſus Chriſt, who can make intrepid lions of his moſt timid ſheep, will, at the hour of trial, communicate to them as much of his fortitude and holy confidence, as they ſtand in need of. Hence women and children, in the moſt violent perſecutions, have declared the truth to tyrants in ſuch an undaunted manner, that the remembrance of it has ſtuck by them

(*r*) Pſa. xlv. 8.

during

during their whole lives. Thus the firmneſs and magnanimity of our Saviour will be always a ſource of comfort to his faithful ſervants.

But no leſs comfortable is the conſummate wiſdom and prudence that ſhone forth in this pattern of perfection, who did not ſuffer himſelf to be drawn into the ſubtile ſnare of perplexity, by an ambiguous queſtion; but before he anſwered it, he cleared up its obſcurity and equivocation, and uſed the utmoſt caution not to prejudice the truth. The Spirit of this world is very induſtrious and artful in his endeavours to perplex and confound our ideas of the eſſential truths of religion, that he may afterwards take the advantage of our doubts and perplexities. In this work, none do him more ſervice than thoſe learned men who, by their abſtracted notions, and ſcholaſtic ſubtilties, ſo perplex and obſcure the cleareſt truths, that others of leſs ſagacity are entirely at a loſs how to go about to unravel them. This is a moſt wretched employment indeed; which the prince of darkneſs, as he is the greateſt gainer by it, will one day recompence according to its deſerts. But Jeſus Chriſt the eternal WORD who, at the firſt Creation, cauſed the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, accounts it a part of his prophetic and mediatorial office, to extricate truth from perplexity, and to reduce to order that confuſion which has been introduced by deſigning men and ſcholaſtic dreamers. It is well for us that we have

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an all-wiſe Mediator, who is made wiſdom to us, ſince we have to do with a ſubtile enemy, who has a thouſand ways to circumvent us; who would take advantage of our ſimplicity, did not the watchful eye of the bleſſed Jeſus prevent us from falling into dangerous perplexities and embarraſſments. This is a ſingular comfort to perſecuted Chriſtians, who in their examinations are often vexed with intricate and ambiguous queſtions; ſince they may be aſſured, that Jeſus Chriſt the Captain of their Salvation, who was himſelf tempted in the ſame manner, has not only a compaſſionate tenderneſs for his conflicting ſoldiers, but will alſo give them words and wiſdom (*s*); and will alſo, as it were, put a clue into their hands, which will guide them out of the labyrinth of equivocal and perplexing examinations.

2. It is the duty of the followers of Chriſt to avoid all appearances of evil.

Our Saviour could with all boldneſs aſk Pilate, whether he taxed him with rebellious and ſeditious deſigns of himſelf, or whether his accuſers had whiſpered ſuch things in his ears? This his undaunted firmneſs was the effect of his innocence; for he had avoided every appearance of evil. By this behaviour, he gave us an admirable pattern for our compliance with theſe words of his Apoſtle, 'Abſtain 'from all appearance of evil (*t*).' Many are the malignant eyes that narrowly watch every

(*s*) Luke xxi. 15. (*t*) 1 Theſ. v. 22.

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ſtep of the children of God, and put the worſt conſtruction on their actions. Therefore it behoves them not only carefully to avoid all manner of vice, but even the appearance of what may be conſtrued to their diſadvantage. But to this end, it is requiſite to preſerve a very tender conſcience (which, like the pupil of the eye, is hurt by the leaſt atom of ſin) a conſtant ſelf-denial, and a continual watchfulneſs over our inward thoughts and outward demeanor. Theſe precautions muſt alſo be accompanied with inceſſant prayer, that the omniſcient God who counteth all our ſteps will eſtabliſh all our goings by his ſacred Word. But whoever ſets about this arduous taſk, relying merely on his own ſtrength, wiſdom, and prudence, will, before he is aware, meet with a grievous fall.

3. It is a grievous offence to the reſt of the world, when truth and godlineſs are perſecuted by thoſe perſons, who ought to countenance them.

Pilate, as a ſtateſman, was here offended, that the Jewiſh Prieſts ſhould deliver up to him their Meſſiah and King, and deſire that he ſhould be put to death. By this proceeding of the Jews, the Heathens were hardened in their hatred againſt Jeſus, for they ſaw him perſecuted by his own people, among whom he was born. Woe to the world likewiſe becauſe of this offence! But happy are they who are the innocent objects of ſuch unrighteous pro-

proceedings, ſince the bleſſed Jeſus has ſanctified this kind of ſuffering in his own adorable perſon, and has declared that theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. The Great and Wiſe of this World cannot bear to hear inſtruction from Chriſt and his members.

How was Pilate diſpleaſed when the Lord Jeſus, inſtead of returning an immediate anſwer, by a diſcreet queſtion gave him an intimation, that he ought not to ſuffer himſelf to be impoſed upon by his enemies, and to be prepoſſeſſed by their equivocal accuſation. As the ſame ſpirit of reſentment againſt diſcreet intimations ſtill continues among thoſe, who have the power in their hands, and have not yet been modelled into gentleneſs and humility by the ſpirit of Chriſt, whatever they do, they think muſt be right; and they look upon the moſt humble and mild remonſtrances as an affront offered to their dignity. The privileges of princes are a much more pleaſing topic to them, than the duties incumbent on that high ſtation; and it is with a reluctant impatience that they hear themſelves put in mind of their duty, though it be from the Word of God. Nay, though it is a general maxim in the world, That one is not to put up with an offence of any kind; yet they think Chriſtians are to be harraſſed and inſulted by them, without ſo much as opening their mouths. Thus it muſt be for a time; but the ſcene will at laſt be ſhifted, and a day

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is at hand when the Saints ſhall judge the world (*u*).

5. Every Chriſtian, in conſidering all the circumſtances of our Saviour's paſſion, has ſufficient cauſe to put this queſtion to himſelf, What haſt thou done?

Of the bleſſed Jeſus it is ſaid in Scripture, 'He did no violence, neither was any deceit 'in his mouth (*x*); he went about doing 'good (*y*).' The malefactor, who was crucified with our bleſſed Lord, ſays of him, 'This 'man hath done nothing amiſs (*z*).' Yea, Chriſt himſelf ſays in the face of the enraged multitude, 'Many good works have I ſhewed 'you from my Father: for which of thoſe 'works do ye ſtone me (*a*)?' But when any of us ſhall aſk his own heart, What haſt thou done? What a multitude of ſinful actions will then preſent themſelves to his affrighted conſcience, which are recorded in God's book of remembrance! Now, amidſt the terrors that ſurround us, when we find we are ſuch miſerable ſinners, and have been ſo frequently guilty of tranſgreſſing the commandments of God, let us not forget, during this ſalutary contrition, to lift up the eye of faith to Jeſus the immaculate Lamb of God, concerning whom Pilate himſelf cries out 'Why [would 'you crucify him?] what evil hath he 'done (*b*)?' The innocence and merits of

(*u*) 1 Cor. vi. 2. (*x*) Iſa. liii. 9. (*y*) Acts x. 38.
(*z*) Luke xxiii. 41. (*a*) John x. 32. (*b*) Luke xxiii. 22.

Chriſt

Chriſt muſt henceforth be the aſylum, to which we may fly for refuge from the complaints and accuſations of our conſciences. This is the way to make a beneficial application to ourſelves of this part of our Saviour's ſufferings.

THE PRAYER.

WE thank thee, O gracious and merciful God, becauſe thou haſt cauſed an account of the arraignment of our Saviour before the tribunal of the Gentiles to be inſerted in thy holy Word, for our edification and comfort. Grant that every one of us, according to the circumſtances in which he may find himſelf, may rightly apply it to his own benefit and conſolation. Be pleaſed to convince thoſe ſinners who are accuſed by their own conſciences of their wretched and dangerous condition, that the ſenſe of their guilt may excite in them a godly ſorrow, and a ſincere repentance and amendment of life. Manifeſt to thy faithful ſervants the myſtery of their Saviour's innocence, that they may find abundant comfort in it under all the faults and imperfections of which they are conſcious that they are guilty, and by his merits ſilence all the accuſations of Satan and their own conſcience. Bleſs therefore this part of thy Word to our ſouls, that it may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praiſe of thy name. Amen.

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CONSIDERATION IV.

The good confeſſion which CHRIST *made concerning his Kingdom before* Pontius Pilate *the* Roman *Governor.*

'(*a*) JESUS anſwered, My kingdom is not 'of this world: if my kingdom were 'of this world, then would my ſervants fight, 'that I ſhould not be delivered to the Jews: 'But now is my kingdom not from hence. 'Pilate therefore ſaid unto him, Art thou a 'King then? Jeſus anſwered, Thou ſayeſt 'that I am a King. To this end was I born, 'and for this cauſe came I into the world, that 'I ſhould bear witneſs unto the truth. Every 'one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

We have before obſerved, that the point concerning Chriſt's kingdom was under examination before the civil tribunal of Pilate. For the High Prieſts and Elders having accuſed our bleſſed Saviour of pretending to be a King, Pilate queſtioned him about that particular, and aſked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? But our bleſſed Lord, before he returned a direct anſwer to this queſtion, put a previous queſtion to Pilate, in order to learn what idea he had annexed to this title, the King of the Jews. Accordingly Jeſus ſaid unto Pilate,

(*a*) John xviii. 36, 37.

'Sayeſt thou this of thyſelf, or did others 'tell it thee of me?' Pilate, indeed, ſeems to have reſented this anſwer, and by another queſtion, *viz.* 'What haſt thou done?' was for putting the cauſe on another iſſue. But our bleſſed Saviour keeps to the eſſential point; and anſwering Pilate's former queſtion in the words which we have cited above, makes a good confeſſion of the true nature of his Kingdom.

This he does with the greateſt wiſdom, diſcretion, and foreſight; ſo that in the firſt place, according to the idea which Pilate had conceived of the accuſation, namely, that a temporal King was therein meant, he anſwers the queſtion in the negative. But, on the contrary, with regard to the ſenſe which the title of King of the Jews bears in the writings of the Prophets, his anſwer is affirmative. By this our bleſſed Lord has ſet his ſuffering members a pattern of wiſdom and prudence, and ſhews how to make proper diſtinctions in anſwering intricate, ambiguous, and enſnaring queſtions.

Hence it appears that this good confeſſion of Chriſt concerning his kingdom conſiſts of two parts.

In the firſt part of his confeſſion, Jeſus rectifies the falſe notion that Pilate had formed of his kingdom, and gives him to underſtand, that he is no temporal King.

In the ſecond, he explains the true nature of his Kingdom, and ſhews that he is a ſpiritual King.

I.

In the firſt part of our Saviour's wiſe and good confeſſion, wherein he rectifies the falſe idea which Pilate had of his kingdom, we may obſerve theſe three particulars.

Firſt, He confeſſes that he really has a kingdom; for he expreſly mentions it no leſs than three times in theſe words: 'My kingdom is 'not of this world; if my kingdom were of 'this world——but now my kingdom is not 'from hence.' With what right our bleſſed Lord makes this declaration, and his motives to it, ſhall ſhew from the ſecond part of his confeſſion.

Secondly, He deſcribes his kingdom, and diſtinguiſhes it from earthly kingdoms, ſaying, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' Our bleſſed Saviour does not ſay that his kingdom is not IN this world; for the Communion of Saints, who acknowledge Jeſus Chriſt for their King, is already formed in this world from among the human race. But he ſays his kingdom is not OF this world, *i. e.* it is not of the ſame nature with earthly kingdoms. As if our Lord had ſaid, "My kingdom is no "earthly kingdom, is not governed in a po-"litical manner according to human laws and "inſtitutions; nor is it defended by carnal

" weapons or temporal arms, or conducted
" with external pomp and ceremony; and
" conſequently the Roman Emperor has no-
" thing to fear from it. I ſhall not in the
" leaſt alienate his ſubjects from their allegi-
" ance to him, nor encroach on his temporal
" rights."

It is true, the kingdoms of this world are under the controll of the Son of God, who, together with his Father, ſo appoints, diſpoſes, and orders their power and limits, as beſt contributes to the chaſtiſement of his people, or the protection of his church. Therefore, in his character of the Eternal Wiſdom, he ſays, 'By me kings reign, and princes decree juſ-
'tice (*b*).' They all hold their dominions as fiefs from the King of kings and Lord of lords, and muſt acknowledge, 'that the
'moſt High ruleth in the kingdoms of men,
'and giveth them to whomſoever he will (*c*).' But the proper kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, which he here emphatically calls 'My king-
'dom * [*i. e.* the kingdom, which he governs as mediator between God and Man and whoſe ſubjects he purchaſed with his blood] is no worldly Kingdom, but a Heavenly kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven, as it is frequently termed in the Goſpel.

This kingdom of the Meſſiah is, in ſeveral reſpects, directly oppoſite to the kingdoms of

(*b*) Prov. viii. 15, 16. (*c*) Dan. iv. 17.
* ἡ βασιλεια ἡ ἐμη.

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this world. No unrighteouſneſs has place there. No tears of the opreſſed are ſeen, nor the groans of ſuffering innocence are heard, in that kingdom. It is founded on truth and righteouſneſs, and is governed with mildneſs, love, and equity. In this kingdom 'the King's 'ſtrength alſo loveth judgment (*d*).' In ſeveral other particulars alſo it is infinitely exhalted above all the kingdoms of this world *, as will appear by the following particulars.

1. Temporal kingdoms derive their origin from mortal men; but the kingdom of Chriſt has the immortal God for its founder, who by an eternal decree hath appointed it unto the Mediator of the new Covenant (*e*).

2. The laws by which worldly kingdoms are governed are inſtituted by men, and the obſervance of thoſe laws are enforced by pains and penalties; but the laws of the kingdom of Chriſt derive their ſanction from heaven, where they were made, and are written in the hearts of his ſubjects by the ſpirit of love.

3. The kingdoms of this world affect external pomp and ſplendor, in order to dazzle the eye, and command reſpect; but the kingdom of Chriſt is the kingdom of the Croſs, and its ornaments conſiſt in the holineſs of its ſubjects (*f*).

(*d*) Pſalm xcix. 4.

* Vide MERCKENII Obſerv. Crit. in Paſſionem Jeſu Chriſti, p. 553.

(*e*) Luke xxii. 29. (*f*) Pſalm xciii. 5.

4. The power of temporal kingdoms extends only to the bodies, lives, and poſſeſſions of the ſubjects; but the kingdom of Chriſt extends its authority over the ſouls and conſciences of men.

5. The ſubjects of the kingdoms of this world conſiſt of a mixture of good and bad; but the proper ſubjects of Jeſus Chriſt are born of God, and are Kings and Prieſts to God, his heavenly Father.

6. Temporal kingdoms are protected by worldly arms; but the weapons employed in the kingdom of Chriſt are ſpiritual (*g*).

7. The kingdoms of this world ſtand in need of ſtrong towns and fortreſſes for their ſecurity; but it is not ſo in the kingdom of Chriſt, for 'the Lord is a wall of fire round 'about his people (*h*).' Therefore may his ſubjects ſing, 'We have a ſtrong city; ſalva-'tion will God appoint for walls and bul-'warks (*i*).'

8. The greateſt happineſs in earthly kingdoms conſiſts in outward peace, and affluence of worldly goods. The kingdom of Chriſt is righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt (*k*).

9. The kingdoms of this world have their bounds and limits, and are confined to particular nations: But of the kingdom of Chriſt

(*g*) 2 Cor. x. 3, 4. (*h*) Zech. ii. 5.
(*i*) Iſa. xxvi. 1. (*k*) Rom. xiv. 17.

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it is written, 'All kings ſhall fall down before 'him, all nations ſhall ſerve him (*l*).'

10. To earthly kingdoms an appointed time is ſet, how long they ſhall ſubſiſt; but of the kingdom of the Meſſiah it is ſaid, 'of his 'Kingdom there ſhall be no end (*m*).' From theſe particulars we may form a clearer conception of the meaning of thoſe words, 'My 'kingdom is not of this world.'

Thirdly, Our bleſſed Lord gives a reaſon why his kingdom is not a kingdom of this world. Here, indeed, he might have appealed to the predictions of the Prophets, in which the kingdom of the Meſſiah is generally repreſented as a ſpiritual kingdom (*n*). He might have made a fuller repreſentation of it, and have compared the nature of his kingdom with that of earthly kingdoms. But this, Pilate would have neither had patience to hear, nor capacity to underſtand. Therefore Chriſt in his conſummate wiſdom offers to him ſuch proofs as were adapted to his reaſon, and which, as a ſtateſman, he could not but underſtand: For he draws this plain concluſion, 'If my kingdom were 'of this world, then would my ſervants fight, 'that I ſhould not be delivered to the Jews.' As if our bleſſed Lord had ſaid, "The kings "of this world have their officers, life-guards, "ſoldiers, garriſons, and armies, for the pro- "tection of their perſons and ſubjects. There-

(*l*) Pſal. lxxii. 11. (*m*) Luke i. 33.
(*n*) Pſal. lxxii. Jer. xxiii. Zech. ix.

" fore if I had any deſign to be a worldly King " of the Jews, I ſhould, like other kings, have " provided officers, ſoldiers, and life-guards, to " defend my perſon againſt inſults and violence. " Nay, theſe my dependants, inſtead of ſleep- " ing laſt night in the garden, when the Jews " apprehended me, would have fought, and " made a vigorous reſiſtance; ſo that I had " not been carried off by mine enemies, with- " out great blood-ſhed on both ſides. This " had been the caſe if I were an earthly " King. But as no ſuch ſcheme ever entered " into my thoughts, thoſe few diſciples that I " have are quite unfit for the execution of ſuch " enterpriſing projects; and as I myſelf enjoined " them to make no reſiſtance, you, as a man " of ſenſe and a ſtateſman, from this ſingle " circumſtance may eaſily conclude, that I am " very far from being an earthly monarch, " and that the Emperor has nothing at all to " apprehend from me." Thus Chriſt in the firſt part of his confeſſion invalidates the falſe opinion, which might be entertained of his kingdom. Hence we may learn the following truths.

1. By our Saviour's humility and ſelf-denial, our exceſſive pride and ambition were to be expiated.

The Son of God is here, indeed, ſeen in the loweſt ſtate of humiliation and abaſement. He not only deſcends from the Throne of Heaven into bonds and miſery; but here he pub-

publicly renounces the thrones of the earth, to which he had the moſt rightful claim: For who is more worthy to wear an earthly crown, than he who diſtributes them to men? But he deſpiſes the ſplendor of golden crowns, and the blaze of gems, and permits a crown of thorns to ſurround his ſacred temples. Of ſuch an aſtoniſhing humiliation, the cauſe muſt have been very momentous *. Man, in the State of Innocence, was the king and ſovereign of all earthly creatures, the viſible Vicegerent of the inviſible God; but not ſatisfied with this honour and dignity, he aimed at ſomething higher; he wiſhed to have no Superior, and to reign without controll. Hence he withdraws his allegiance from his lawful Sovereign, and refuſes to obey the laws and ordinances of his Creator. This aſpiring temper, and rebellious inclination, have been unhappily tranſmitted down by the firſt parents of mankind to all their deſcendants. Our hearts are naturally, refractory and diſobedient. We are all by nature ſavage and untractable; and though we are plunged into a miſerable ſtate, our pride is equal to our miſery. We have an earthly diſpoſition, diſorderly appetites, and an eager inclination for every thing which makes a ſhow, and glitters in the world; and we are paſſionately fond of be-

* L'Incarnation montre à l'homme la grandeur de ſa miſere, par la grandeur du remede qu' il a fallu, "The incarnation of "Chriſt ſhews to man the greatneſs of his miſery, ſince it re-"quired a remedy of ſuch tranſcendent worth." *Penſées de M. Paſcal*, p. 30. *W.*

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ing honoured and reſpected by others, and cannot bear the leaſt humiliation or contempt. This arrogant haughtineſs, which ſhews itſelf more in ſome men than in others, could be expiated only by the deep humiliation and abaſement of Him, who is the Prince of the Sovereigns of the earth. Satan would for ever have decoyed us by worldly pomp and ſhow, had not the Son of God by his low abaſement diſengaged us from it. Let us admire his ſtupendous love, and ſhew our gratitude to our bleſſed Redeemer by a willing renunciation of the pomps and vanities of this world. Let us thankfully make uſe of this freedom, which was purchaſed for us at ſo dear a rate.

2. It is an unſpeakable comfort to faithful and humble Chriſtians, that the kingdom of Chriſt is not of this world. If the kingdom of Chriſt were an earthly kingdom, how hard would be the fate of the poor and wretched? If Chriſt was an earthly monarch, how difficult would they find it to be admitted into his preſence, with their humble petitions? And how often would they be inſultingly repulſed by the officers of his court? But now, as he is a ſpiritual King, no ſuch difficulties are to be apprehended in approaching him. For it is written of him, 'He ſhall deliver the needy when 'he crieth; the poor alſo, and him that hath 'no helper. He ſhall ſpare the poor and needy, 'and ſave the ſouls of the indigent. He ſhall 'redeem

'redeem their ſoul from deceit and violence (*o*).' This amiable deſcription of our King ſhould endear him to our ſouls, and induce all timorous conſciences to place a firm truſt in him, and to comfort themſelves with the thoughts of being under his Almighty protection.

3. As our King is not of this world, ſo muſt we likewiſe, if we will be his true ſubjects, ſeparate and diſtinguiſh ourſelves from the men of this world, by a benevolent temper and heavenly converſation.

This is the natural conſequence of this confeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt. Here that common obſervation muſt take place, "As the King is, "ſo are his ſubjects *.' Our bleſſed Lord himſelf ſaith of his diſciples, 'They are not of 'the world, as I am not of the world (*p*).' May this important truth ſink deep into our hearts! We own Him to be our King, who was the completeſt Pattern of humility and ſelf-abaſement; who not only deſcended from the Throne of God to poverty and bonds, but alſo publicly renounced the thrones and kingdoms of this world; who fled from the people when they were for making him king by force; and laſtly, who willingly ſuffered himſelf to be apprehended, bound, inſulted, and reviled. If we would be the true and faithful ſubjects of ſuch a lowly King, we muſt alſo put on the ſame meek and lowly diſpoſition; we muſt rather ſhun than purſue the honours of this

(*o*) Pſa. lxxii. 12, 13, 14. * Qualis Rex, talis Grex.
(*p*) John xvii. 16.

world,

world, baniſh all pride and ambition from our breaſts, and be clothed with humility. Moreover, we profeſs ourſelves the ſubjects of a King, who was ſo poor, that he had not where to lay his head; who was ſo far from making it his buſineſs to amaſs wealth, and to heap up treaſures on earth, that he diveſted himſelf of his own Divine riches, for our welfare. We muſt likewiſe, after his example, deſpiſe rather than amaſs periſhable riches, and lay up for ourſelves treaſures in heaven. If God is pleaſed to ſend us riches, inſtead of ſetting our hearts upon them by an inordinate love, we muſt make to ourſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, by diſtributing to the poor, and think it more bleſſed to give than to receive. Laſtly, we ſerve a King, whoſe whole life was full of hardſhips and troubles; who, for our ſake, deprived himſelf of all his heavenly enjoyments; who came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for our ſouls. Thus muſt we alſo be declared enemies of voluptuouſneſs and ſenſuality; nay, we muſt uſe lawful pleaſures and worldly conveniencies with true ſelf-denial, and, according to the great example ſet by our Spiritual Sovereign, exerciſe ourſelves in temperance, chaſtity, and purity of heart. Thus from the very nature of the kingdom of Chriſt, ariſe the ſtrongeſt motives for denying all inordinate love of honours, riches, and pleaſures; motives

tives of infinitely greater weight, than any which reaſon or philoſophy can ſuggeſt.

But, let us here enter on a ſerious examination of ourſelves, and ask our own hearts, Whether we are ſuch ſubjects, whoſe temper and converſation bear a reſemblance to thoſe of our ſpiritual King, Jeſus Chriſt? We ſhall greatly deceive ourſelves, if we ſuppoſe that all thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians are true ſubjects of Chriſt. The man of a haughty and proud ſpirit; he that looks on reſtleſs ambition as the characteriſtic of a great and noble mind; he that is covetous, or given up to ſenſuality and voluptuouſneſs, is no citizen of that heavenly kingdom, which is not of this world. On the contrary, while he ſuffers ſuch diſpoſitions to exerciſe dominion over him, he is a ſlave of Satan, the God of this world, who has eſtabliſhed his tyrannizing throne on theſe vicious inclinations of the human mind. Let every one therefore, who ſtill finds himſelf in ſuch a miſerable ſtate, lift up his hands to the King of kings, and pray to him, that he would renew a right ſpirit or temper of mind within him, and make him truly ſubject to his ſceptre of righteouſneſs. This wonderful humility and abaſement of the bleſſed Jeſus is a powerful motive for us to humble ourſelves, and renounce the high things of the world. Does our Lord and King publicly diſclaim the pomp of the world, what have we therefore to do with it? If we would put our truſt, and glory

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in him, we muſt diveſt ourſelves of all unbecoming pride and arrogance; we muſt wean ourſelves from an over-fondneſs for earthly things, and bring down our ambitious and aſpiring thoughts to the obedience of Chriſt. And how willingly ſhould we do this, were our hearts inflamed with that love, which humbled him ſo low!

4. The faithful ſervants and ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt muſt fight valiantly for their King, and the honour of his kingdom.

Our bleſſed Saviour, by ſaying, 'If my king-'dom were of this world, then would my 'ſervants fight, that I ſhould not be de-'livered up to the Jews,' gives us likewiſe to underſtand, that it is the indiſpenſible duty of the ſervants and ſubjects of earthly Sovereigns to fight for their King, when he is threatened with any danger. Hence the inference is very natural, that if we would be real ſervants and ſubjects of Jeſus Chriſt, our ſpiritual King, we muſt alſo exert ourſelves, and fight for him in a manner conformable to the ſpiritual nature of his kingdom; not with carnal weapons, but with the weapons of God (*p*), which are mighty to the caſting down of every high thing, that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and the obedience of Chriſt. This is, indeed, in a more particular manner, the duty of the Miniſters of the Goſpel, who, when truth is oppreſſed, are not to be indifferent, or from a

(*p*) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

love

love of outward eaſe and ſecurity, to withdraw themſelves from the field of combat for the purity of the doctrines of Chriſt. On the contrary, they muſt contend for the truth, and, as St. Paul exhorts Timothy, 'Endure hard-'neſs as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt (*q*)'. For in this combat, in behalf of the truth of the Goſpel, ſufferings muſt be expected; and we ought to be ready to give up honour and character to the tongues of ſlanderers, and the virulent pens of malicious libellers, unleſs we will baſely betray the truth. Therefore, the Miniſters of the Goſpel, when the cauſe of Chriſt and his kingdom is in danger, muſt fight for it with prayers, with their tongues, and with their pens, when called upon by Divine Providence; and in this ſpiritual warfare, they muſt be determined to ſacrifice their character, their eaſe, their ſubſtance, and even life itſelf. Nevertheleſs, it is alſo the duty of every private real Chriſtan, when the kingdom of Chriſt is in danger, to take up the armour of prayer, and make uſe of the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God. By theſe diſtinguiſhing marks, every one may prove himſelf, whether he be a faithful ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt? Whether he has reſolution and ſpirit to riſk every thing for his honour? Or whether, when the honour of his Sovereign is injured, and the courſe of his divine Truths obſtructed, he will ſtand as an unconcerned ſpectator?

(*q*) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

Our

II.

Our bleſſed Saviour, in the ſecond part of his confeſſion, explains the true nature of his kingdom, and ſhews that he is a ſpiritual King. Herein we ſhall obſerve the three following particulars.

Firſt, The occaſion of this part of our Lord's confeſſion; which was given by Pilate's ſecond queſtion, namely, Art thou a King then? The Governor probably ſurmiſed at firſt, that the Jews accuſed Chriſt of ſetting up for a King, out of mere hatred and malice. But now he hears Jeſus himſelf thrice make mention of his kingdom. This perplexes Pilate, and he concludes that if Chriſt has a kingdom, he muſt be a King; and as he knew of no other kingdom but thoſe of this world, he muſt have thought it ſtrange, that there ſhould be kingdoms which were not of the world. He therefore again comes up to the Lord Jeſus, and, in order to draw the truth out of him, propoſes a new queſtion to him.

Secondly, We may obſerve the confeſſion, which Jeſus made in theſe words, 'Thou 'ſayeſt that I am a King. As if our bleſſed Lord had ſaid, Royalty is what I muſt not allow to be denied to me; but neither yourſelf nor the Jews have a right idea of it. However, truth is truth; and I ſhould be found a liar, if I was to deny that regal dignity, which my Father

ther hath conferrred on me. Thus, as our bleſſed Saviour had acknowledged himſelf to be the Son of God, in plain and explicit terms, before the Spiritual Court of the Jews; ſo does he here, before the Civil Tribunal of Pilate, with the ſame clearneſs and perſpicuity, declare himſelf to be the King of Iſrael. Had the life of our bleſſed Saviour been dearer to him than the truth and God's honour, he might eaſily have been releaſed from his bonds, by an ambiguous, evaſive anſwer, and might have ſaid, I am no King, *i. e.* I am not a King in your ſenſe of the word. But the bleſſed Jeſus ſcorns to make uſe of any ſubterfuges, and inſtead of giving any ſanction to equivocations and mental evaſions by his great example, he ſhews by his behaviour on this occaſion, that truth is boldly to be acknowledged before Kings and Rulers, from the heart. But our bleſſed Lord does not ſtop at a bare confeſſion; for he farther adds,

Thirdly, An explanation of it; in which

1. He ſets forth the true nature of his kingly office.

2. He lays before Pilate the diſtinguiſhing character of the ſubjects of his kingdom

1. The true nature of his kingly office is explained by Chriſt in theſe words: 'To this 'end I was born, and for this cauſe came I 'into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs unto 'the truth.' By this our bleſſed Saviour gives us to underſtand, that his dominion, as our

Mediator, is not confined to the external goods and earthly poſſeſſions of men, but extends itſelf to the conſcience; and that the deſign of his government is to free his ſubjects from thoſe fallacious and lying cuſtoms, in which they were entangled by the Fall, from all the deceitful and wicked ways of Satan, and to bring them to the acknowledgement of the truth. By Truth, Jeſus here means the truths contained in the Goſpel. It was not our bleſſed Saviour's concern to propoſe philoſophical, mathematical, or political truths. The truth, to the knowledge of which he was to bring mankind, was of a much ſublimer nature. It was a truth unknown to human reaſon; a truth which his heavenly Father had declared by Moſes and the Prophets in types and figures, by promiſes and predictions. The ſubſtance of this great Truth, is, That as no man can be juſtified, and conſequently entitled to eternal happineſs, by the works of the Law, God, out of his infinite love to mankind, has given his Son as the Saviour and Reconciler of the world, to the end that all who acknowledge their inability, believe on the name of the great Mediator, and give themſelves up to be renewed by the Spirit in the image of God, may not periſh, but have everlaſting life. This doctrine of the Goſpel is emphatically ſtiled the Truth, not only as it derives its origin from God, who is Truth itſelf, but likewiſe as it is a well-grounded, infallible truth, and worthy of all acceptation.

Of

Of this great truth, the bleſſed Jeſus was to bear witneſs both in his words and actions; and therefore he is called 'the faithful witneſs (*r*),' and the Father has declared, ſaying, 'Behold, 'I have given him for a Witneſs to the peo-'ple (*ſ*).' He has likewiſe all the qualifications, which can be juſtly required in a witneſs. If it be neceſſary, that a witneſs ſhould have heard or ſeen the things which he teſtifies, in order to have a certain knowledge of them; the Son of God was himſelf preſent at the eternal reconciliatory council of the Father, in which it was graciouſly determined, that the world ſhould be redeemed by the Son. Jeſus had voluntarily promiſed to take on himſelf the work of redemption, and his Almighty Father in return had promiſed him, that he would anoint and eſtabliſh him in the human nature he was to aſſume, as a King over the human race. Therefore, he might juſtly ſay, 'We 'ſpeak that we do know, and teſtify that we 'have ſeen (*t*).' Hence alſo, John the Baptiſt ſays of him, 'He that cometh from above 'is above all; and what he hath ſeen and heard, 'that he teſtifieth (*u*).'

Moreover, our bleſſed Lord ſubjoins with a peculiar energy, that for this end he was born, and that he came into the world, as the great Ambaſſador of God, to bear witneſs unto the truth. Theſe words pre-ſuppoſe his prior ex-

(*r*) Rev. i. 5. (*ſ*) Iſaiah lv. 4. (*t*) John iii. 11.
(*u*) John iii. 31, 32.

iſtence, and that he was in poſſeſſion of his regal dignity before he became viſible in the world. Hence he intimates, that he came into the world with no other view than to convince mankind of theſe great truths, That he is the only ſacrifice for the ſins of the world; That whoever will be ſaved muſt believe on his name; and by ſuch teſtimony, to free mankind from the dominion and tyranny of the Spirit of lies and error, to enlighten them with the light of truth, and to fit them for the ſervice of God, that they might worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth. Theſe are the royal tranſactions of Jeſus Chriſt; which, it muſt be owned, bear but little reſemblance to the political tranſactions and warlike exploits of earthly kings, whoſe buſineſs is to enact ſalutary laws for the ſupport of their kingdom and the external welfare of their ſubjects, and to enforce obedience to them, by puniſhing the refractory and diſobedient. Our bleſſed Saviour likewiſe, in theſe words, deſcribes

2. The diſtinguiſhing character of his ſubjects: 'Every one that is of the truth heareth 'my voice.' Theſe words exhibit to us both the characteriſtic and duty of the ſubjects of Chriſt.

Their characteriſtic is this, 'They are of the 'truth.' As 'to be of God (*x*),' ſignifies the ſame thing 'as to be born of God (*y*),' ſo 'to 'be of the truth,' is of the ſame import as 'to

(*x*) John viii. 47. (*y*) 1 John ii. 29.

'be

'be born of the truth (*z*) or to be begotten of 'God, [the ſelf-exiſtent Truth] with the word 'of truth (*a*).' That is, in other words, to receive the teſtimony which God has given of his Son, and which the Son himſelf has given of the truth, ſo far as to be enlightened, converted, and from the heart to hate all deceitful ways; and to obey and bear an affectionate love to the truth, as if it was the parent that begot us.

The duty of the ſubjects of Chriſt is this, namely, that they hear his voice: 'Every one 'that is of the truth heareth my voice, *i. e.* acknowledges me for his Sovereign and Inſtructor, and obeys my precepts and injunctions from the heart. When I ſay, 'Repent and 'believe the Goſpel!' he hears this voice not only with his ears, but likewiſe attends to it with an obedient heart. When I ſay, 'Who-'ever will be my diſciple, let him deny him-'ſelf, and take up his croſs and follow me!' he does as I enjoin him. When I ſay, 'Love 'your enemies; do good to them that hate 'you!' he treats his enemies with kindneſs, gentleneſs, and humanity. Laſtly, ſince I ſay, 'Render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæ-'ſar's, and unto God the things that are 'God's!' he omits no opportunity of complying with this my command. From all this Pilate might have been convinced, that the doctrines of Chriſt, inſtead of encouraging rebellion, made the beſt of ſubjects; that the

(*z*) James i. 18. (*a*) James i. 18.

Jews were his enemies for no other reaſon, but for telling them the truth, which their mutinous and haughty ſpirit could by no means bear.

This was, indeed, ſuch diſcourſe, as had never before been heard in Pilate's hall of judgment. By this teſtimony of the truth, Chriſt further intended, not only to remove Pilate's unneceſſary apprehenſions, that he inſtigated the Emperor's ſubjects to a revolt; but likewiſe indirectly to make an impreſſion on his heart, to inſinuate an awakening, but wholſome, ſting into his conſcience, and to inſpire him with the love of truth. Notwithſtanding all this, we ſhall ſee in the ſequel, that Pilate ſoon made light of this kind admonition, and precluded his heart againſt this teſtimony of the truth. Let us therefore take care, that this diſcourſe of the bleſſed Jeſus may bring forth more fruit in our hearts; and to this end, we ſhall make the following obſervations on this ſubject.

1. Our bleſſed Saviour, by owning his regal dignity, has publicly owned us for his ſubjects, and eſtabliſhed his kingdom over all.

We muſt approve ourſelves his ſubjects, by overcoming the world and its evil cuſtoms, as he overcame the world; and by overcoming the luſts of the fleſh, to which the moſt powerful monarchs are often ſlaves. If Chriſt our King declared, that he was born and came into the world to bear witneſs unto truth; ſo ſhould we likewiſe be thoroughly perſuaded, that the end

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of our being born again is, that we may love the truth, and bear witneſs to it in our words and actions.

2. As the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt is a kingdom of truth, no one is to be admitted into it, who loveth or maketh a lie.

Satan is in Scripture called the father of lies (*b*); and the account given of his ſubjects by St. John (*c*) is, that they love and take a pleaſure in forging lies. In Satan's kingdom there is nothing but falſity and diſſimulation, deluſive appearances, and vain deceptions. He infatuates men by giving them falſe ideas of God, whom they falſely imagine to be like themſelves. Hence God ſays to the wicked man, 'Thou 'thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as 'thyſelf (*d*).' As thou makeſt it thy ſupreme felicity to live in mirth and feſtivity, and to enjoy the ſinful pleaſures of the world, thou vainly thinkeſt that this is what I ſhall eaſily connive at, and that I am not at all diſpleaſed with a man who gives himſelf up to ſenſuality and voluptuouſneſs. Satan infatuates men with falſe ideas of repentance: Hence they imagine it conſiſts only in ſaying with the mouth, that they are miſerable ſinners; that they are ſorry for their miſdoings; and that they will amend their lives; while the heart, in the mean time, is not touched, nor is there any change likely to be wrought in it. He infatuates men with falſe ideas of faith: Hence they

(*b*) John viii. 44. (*c*) Rev. 22, 15. (*d*) Pſa. l. 21.

vainly imagine, that if they do but ſtedfaſtly and earneſtly rely on the merits of Chriſt, that faith infallibly will ſave them; whereas they continue under the dominion of ſin, and never ſhew forth this ideal preſumptuous faith of theirs by works of love, and habits of virtue. He infatuates men with moſt falſe ideas of eternal felicity; for carnal men are apt to form to themſelves baſe and groveling ideas of the joys of eternal life, and think that in heaven they ſhall have ſuch enjoyments as are unworthy of that glorious place, the abode of purity and holineſs. Such is the power of the lying Spirit of darkneſs over the underſtanding of thoſe, whom he hath fatally blinded. But no leſs is his faſcinating influence over the perverſe wills of thoſe, whom he has, as it were, bound and fettered with the bonds of falſhood, hypocriſy, and diſſimulation, ſo that nothing leſs than the infinite power of God can break them aſunder. But all theſe chains fall off, when a man is, as it were, born of God, and tranſplanted into the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, which is the kingdom of truth. Then he learns to look on the things which belong to the Spirit of God in a different light from what he did before. Then he is ſenſible what a childiſh, abſurd, and unworthy idea he had entertained of God, of repentance, of faith, and eternal felicity; for his underſtanding being now irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit, he acquires a more

perfect knowledge of these things. Now, the light of truth rises in his understanding; by the lustre of which error, prejudice, and false conceptions of spiritual things, are dissipated like mists before the sun. The true image which is in Christ Jesus will now be formed in his will; and the spirit of God is now by its sacred influence restoring in his soul the Divine resemblance, which consists in wisdom, righteousness, and truth. He now conceives an utter aversion for all falshood, lies, and hypocrisy. He loveth and speaketh the truth from his heart; and is not ashamed to confess it, though attended with the greatest inconveniencies, insults, and affronts. Hence any one may easily infer, whether he belongs to the kingdom of the father of lies; or to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and of the truth.

3. When we are called upon to confess the truth, we ought to avoid all evasions and subterfuges.

Among other reasons why St. Paul calls this confession, which Christ made before Pilate, a good confession (*e*) is, because he clearly and explicitly certified the true nature of his kingdom in these words, without any circumlocution, any vague or ambiguous expression. By this, the Son of God has left a noble example for all true professors, that they may, when brought to be tried before the tribunal of Princes, make an unreserved confession of the truth.

(*e*) 1 Tim. vi. 13.

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Therefore, when we are called upon by God to bear teſtimony to the truth, we muſt not deviate one ſtep from it, or in the leaſt prejudice the truth for fear of the Croſs, or any external ſufferings. It is no leſs than eternal life that lies at ſtake (*f*). He that cannot take up the Croſs of Chriſt will never be owned by him as his diſciple, notwithſtanding the ſublimity of his ſpeculations, or the fluency of his tongue. This ſpirit of integrity, by which the confeſſions of Chriſtians ought to be influenced, was very viſible in the undaunted behaviour of Luther, who made a glorious profeſſion in behalf of oppreſſed truth. For when he was aſked, at the diet of Worms, in the preſence of the Emperor and the principal States of the Empire, Whether he would revoke what he had hitherto taught and written? and that if he did not he ſhould be proceeded againſt with the utmoſt ſeverity; he made this intrepid anſwer: "Since your Imperial Ma-
"jeſty, and the illuſtrious Electors and Princes
"who are here preſent require a plain, di-
"rect, and explicit anſwer to this queſtion, I
"will give one, at which no manner of offence
"can be taken; and it is this: Unleſs I am
"convinced of being in an error by teſtimo-
"nies drawn from the Holy Scriptures, or by
"clear and evident proofs, I neither can, nor
"will, revoke any thing I have ſaid or writ-
"ten; it being neither ſafe nor adviſable to

(*f*) 1 Tim. vi. 12, 13.

"act

" act contrary to my conſcience. By this " declaration I abide; and God be my helper! " Amen." Since therefore we profeſs the doctrine of Chriſt as reformed from the errors and ſuperſtition of Popery, let us pray to God that he will give us the ſpirit of confidence and faith; ſo that if we ſhould be required to make a public confeſſion of the truth, we may ſhew an undaunted reſolution and ingenuous frankneſs, according to the example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and the firſt Reformers of Chriſtianity.

4. Barely to acknowledge the truth is not ſufficient to render us true Chriſtians; but it muſt have a ſalutary effect on our lives and converſation.

Hence our bleſſed Saviour does not ſay, He that merely acknowledges the truth is my ſubject and diſciple; but 'Every one that is of the 'truth, *i. e.* to whom truth, candour, and pro-'bity are become, as it were, habitual, and 'influence all his thoughts, words, and ac-'tions, and heareth my voice, or obeys me 'as his Sovereign.' Let this be particularly obſerved by men of genius and learning, who make profeſſion of the knowledge of truth. If their underſtanding only is buſied amidſt a croud of abſtracted ideas, types, and repreſentations, which even relate to the truths of religion, they do not yet properly belong to the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. But when they act conformably to this truth, which derives its begin-

beginning from a knowledge of our natural blindneſs and imbecillity; then the truth ſhall make them free. 'Ye ſhall know the truth, 'ſaith Chriſt, and the truth ſhall make you free (*g*);' free from ſelf-love, pride, ambition, and haughtineſs; free from the tyranny of carnal luſts, and all criminal deſires. He that has not attained to this glorious freedom, notwithſtanding all his penetration, and ſuppoſed merits in the ſervice of truth, will not have his portion with the true ſubjects of Jeſus Chriſt.

5. Our bleſſed Lord acknowledges none for his ſubjects, but thoſe 'who hear his 'voice.'

Hence Jeſus ſays, in the cloſe of his confeſſion, 'Every one that is of the truth,' and is conſequently my true diſciple and ſubject, 'heareth my voice.' Now he that can ſay I hear the voice of Jeſus Chriſt, may be apt to conclude, that he is therefore of the truth, and one of the true ſubjects of Chriſt. Such a one will perhaps ſay, "If this is all that "is required in a true ſubject of Chriſt, I need "not queſtion but I am one of them; for I "have heard the voice of Jeſus Chriſt, as it "ſounds in the Goſpel, time after time, without number." Alas! vain man, it is not the queſtion, whether the voice of Chriſt has outwardly reached the organs of hearing, and by the ears made its way to thy underſtanding. If that were ſufficient to make thee a ſubject

(*g*) John viii. 32.

of

of Chriſt, the carnal Jews, who in the days of his incarnation heard his voice numberleſs times, would have been his true ſubjects; nevertheleſs, our bleſſed Saviour ſays unto them, 'Ye therefore hear not my words, becauſe ye 'are not of God. Ye are of your father the 'devil, *&c.* (*b*)' Upon this ſuppoſition, Pilate alſo would have been 'of the truth;' for he too heard our Saviour's voice, talking with him in the hall of Judgment. Nay, what is ſtill more, if this ſufficed, the devil himſelf may be ſaid 'to be of the truth;' for he heard the voice of Chriſt when he tempted him in the wilderneſs, and likewiſe in thoſe who were poſſeſſed; yet Chriſt witneſſeth of him, 'that he 'abode not in the truth, becauſe there is no 'truth in him (*i*).'

Hence it appears, that ſomething more is required to render a man a true ſubject of Chriſt, than to hear his voice or his word. For this end, there muſt be an inward and univerſal obedience of the heart, a ſerious attention and ſincere obedience to all his commands, and a lively faith in all his promiſes, ſo as to place ſo great a value on the inviſible rewards expected from them, and ſo to be firmly convinced of the certainty of them, as to be always ready to renounce and part with all temporal enjoyments for his ſake.

Doſt thou therefore boaſt, that thou haſt heard the voice of Jeſus Chriſt? tell me what

(*b*) John viii. 44, 47. (*i*) Ibid. 44.

happy effect it has on thy ſoul. Or thinkeſt thou that the voice of the Son of God, by which the heavens and the earth were made, is a dead and ineffectual ſound, ſuffering men to ſtagnate in their carnal ſecurity? By no means; the voice of Chriſt is ſaid to be like the 'ſound 'of many waters (*k*).' Has the ſound of it therefore awakened thee from the ſleep of ſecurity? The Pſalmiſt ſays (*l*), 'The voice of 'the Lord breaketh the cedars; the voice of 'the Lord divideth the flames of fire; the 'voice of the Lord ſhaketh the wilderneſs; the 'voice of the Lord diſcovereth the foreſts.' Has that glorious voice ſhaken and fertilized thy barren heart? Has it broken the towering cedars of thy carnal imagination? Has it torn up the ill habits ſo deeply rooted in thee? Theſe effects are not like the fleeting images of a dream, but leave a laſting and indelible impreſſion on the heart during the whole courſe of a man's life. Look on others who have heard the voice of Chriſt, and ſee what a change it has wrought in them! Matthew, the Publican, heard his voice, ſaying, 'Follow 'me!' and immediately he left all, and followed Chriſt; Simon and Andrew heard his voice; and they forſook all, and followed him. The young man who died at Nain, heard his voice, raiſed himſelf up, and revived. Lazarus heard his voice, was ſpoke into life, and came forth from his grave. The man afflicted with the palſy heard his voice, and roſe and took up the

(*k*) Rev. i. 15. (*l*) Pſa. xxix. 5, 8, 9.

bed

bed on which he before had been laid. Saul heard his voice; and of a perſecutor and deſtroyer of his followers, became a champion for the truth of the Goſpel. See! what happy effects the voice of Jeſus Chriſt had on theſe remarkable perſons. Nay, it is ſaid in St. John's Goſpel, (*m*) 'The hour is coming, and 'now is, when the dead ſhall hear the voice 'of the Son of God, and they that hear ſhall 'live.' And doſt thou, O man, live the life that is of God? or art thou ſtill dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and pleadeſt thine inability and human weakneſs, when called upon to follow Chriſt, to crucify the fleſh, and other duties that the Goſpel requires? Examine thyſelf well, how it fares with thy ſoul in this point! It is no inconſiderable fault for a man to ſtop his ears, and ſhut up his heart againſt the voice of Chriſt; for whoever will refuſe to hear him, the ſame alſo he will not hear, nor anſwer when they call upon him in their diſtreſs (*n*). Alas! whither can we betake ourſelves when we lie on the bed of death? What can we then implore but mercy! mercy! and who will then hear theſe our cries, but he whom the heavenly Father has enjoined us to hear: 'This is my beloved Son, him ſhall ye hear.' Therefore, if thou haſt not in thy life obediently heard his voice, and conformed to it, What dependance canſt thou have, that he will hear thy faint and broken accents at the approach of

(*m*) Chap. v. 25. (*n*) Prov. i. 24, &c.

death?

death? and how dreadful will be thy caſe if He, who alone has power to ſave and to condemn, ſhould likewiſe turn his ears from thy cries! O let us hear his voice to-day, this inſtant; while we hear his voice, let us not harden our hearts. Let us turn our ears from the deluſive voice of Satan and the world, calling us to indulge in the luſts of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, the pride of life, and other vices. It is enough that we have ſpent the paſt years of our life in ſuch ill courſes. Let us now with tears and prayers approach the bleſſed Jeſus, acknowledging, confeſſing, and bewailing our former diſobedience. Let us intreat him to give us an attentive ear, and an obedient heart. Let us ſincerely believe in the rewards of his promiſing voice; let us obey the precepts of his commanding voice; ſo that one day it may be our happineſs to hear his affectionate voice, ſaying, 'Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, 'inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from 'the foundation of the world.'

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour, whoſe merits are infinite, thanks be to thee for the good confeſſion of thy kingdom, which thou madeſt before Pilate! Praiſed be thy name for the inſtructions thou haſt given us, that we may rightly underſtand the nature of that kingdom! Thou ſeeſt, O Lord, what groſs conceptions and carnal

nal ideas we are apt to entertain of thy ſpiritual kingdom, be pleaſed therefore to inſpire us with a ſalutary knowledge of thy kingly office, and to impart to us that heavenly temper and diſpoſition which is the diſtinguiſhing badge of thy true ſubjects. Make us, we beſeech thee, truly attentive to thy voice, and real lovers of thy truth; ſo that by walking in the truth, and abhorring all falſe ways, and all the deluſions of Satan, we may be more and more convinced that we are thy ſubjects, and that conſequently we may be joint-heirs of thy glorious kingdom. And as we here ſuffer with thee, and combat for thy truth by the confeſſion of thy religion, grant that we may alſo eternally reign with thee, and ſit on thrones, as thou haſt overcome, and are exalted to the throne of thy Father. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VII.

The conſequence of our bleſſed Saviour's good confeſſion before Pilate.

'(*a*) PILATE ſaith unto him, What is 'truth? And when he had ſaid this, 'he went out unto the Jews, and ſaith unto the 'chief Prieſts and the people, I find no fault 'in this man. And the chief Prieſts were

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 12, 13, 14. Mark xv. 3, 4, 5. Luke xxiii. 4. John xviii. 38.

'the more fierce. And when he was accuſed
'of the chief Prieſts and Elders, he anſwered
'nothing. Then ſaith Pilate unto him, An-
'ſwereſt thou nothing? behold, heareſt thou
'not how many things they witneſs againſt thee?
'Jeſus anſwered him to never a word, inſo-
'much that the Governor marvelled greatly.'

In the laſt Conſideration, we have enlarged upon the good confeſſion, which our Saviour made concerning his kingdom before the tribunal of Pilate; we ſhall now farther conſider what followed that good confeſſion,

Firſt, With regard to Pilate,

Secondly, to our Saviour's accuſers,

Thirdly, To the Lord Jeſus himſelf.

I.

With regard to the Roman Governor, two things followed our Lord's confeſſion, namely, 1. A queſtion. 2. An acknowledgement of our bleſſed Saviour's innocence.

1. The queſtion is this: 'What is truth?' Jeſus, in his confeſſion, had ſeveral times mentioned the word Truth, *viz.* 'To this end
'was I born, and for this cauſe came I into
'the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs unto the
'truth. Every one who is of the truth heareth
'my voice.' Upon this, Pilate ſtarts the queſtion, 'What is truth?' At firſt one would, from theſe words, be inclined to entertain a favourable opinion of Pilate, and to admire his willing-

willingneſs to be inſtructed. We ſhould be apt to think that the words of the bleſſed Jeſus had kindled in him ſuch a deſire of knowing the truth, that he wiſhed for nothing more paſſionately than to be throughly inſtructed by this divine Prophet, of whom he had already heard ſuch a great character. But this good opinion, which might be conceived of Pilate from the ſound of his words, is immediately effaced by his ſubſequent behaviour. For he had no ſooner aſked the queſtion, than he turned his back on the Lord Jeſus without ſtaying for an anſwer, and went out to the Jews who were ſtanding without the judgment-hall. Hence it is evident, that he did not aſk this queſtion from any deſire of information; it being probable that he thought it derogatory to his honour, to be taught by a contemptible Jew who ſtood bound before him as a priſoner; but that he aſked it in an ironical manner, and with a mind filled with ſceptical prejudices at leaſt, if not with an averſion to, and contempt of, the truth.

If theſe words therefore be conſtrued according to the temper from whence they proceeded, the meaning of the queſtion will appear to be this: "Why doſt thou talk of truth? Truth "never made any man's fortune. It is no won-"der, indeed, that the Rulers of thy nation are "ſo inveterate againſt thee, and are bent upon "removing thee out of the way. I ſuppoſe "thou haſt told them the truth with too much

" freedom, and offended them by thy reproofs " and public diſcourſes. If it is thy ſole buſi- " neſs to tell the truth, thou wilt have but " few adherents; ſo that the Emperor my " Maſter may be very eaſy about thy imaginary " kingdom. Beſides, if the whole quarrel be- " tween thee and the Jews be about the truth " of religion, thoſe affairs do not properly be- " long to my office; nor ſhall I throw away my " time in the examination of theſe religious diſ- " putes: we Romans leave every one to teach " and believe as he thinks fit, if he does but " behave like a good citizen, and take care not " to diſturb the tranquillity of the ſtate." To " this ironical queſtion Pilate ſubjoined.

2. A confeſſion of the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus. For when Pilate had ſaid this, he went out again unto the Jews, who were gathered together in great numbers in the area before his judgment-hall, and called out openly, or perhaps proclaimed by a herald, in the hearing of the chief Prieſts and all the people, 'I find no fault in this man.' As if he had ſaid, I have examined this man apart concerning the things of which you accuſe him, and have carefully ſifted the whole matter; but I find him guilty of no manner of crime. You ſay, We found him perverting the people; but for my part, I can find no ſhadow of truth in this accuſation. He, indeed, owns that he is a King; but, at the ſame time, he declares that he makes it his ſole buſineſs to bear witneſs to the truth.

truth. This confeſſion, by the Roman law, is no capital crime. If that were the caſe, all the philoſophers throughout the whole Roman Empire would deſerve to be crucified; ſince every one of them thinks he teaches nothing but the truth. If this perſon has too high a conceit of his doctrines, and thinks that he alone is ſo quick-ſighted as to ſee clearly into truth, this is a failing common to other philoſophers, and rather deſerves pity than any puniſhment. At leaſt, with regard to the faults you charge him with, I find him entirely innocent. This, probably, was the opinion of Pilate; and this declaration of our Saviour's innocence he cauſed to be publicly declared before all the people; which, in ſome meaſure, was a political ſtratagem. For as he knew that the Rulers of the people had delivered Chriſt to him out of envy, which opinion is afterwards confirmed by St. Matthew (*b*), he thought it beſt publicly to declare his innocence to the people, who perhaps were better inclined towards Jeſus, and thereby to give them an opportunity of taking the innocent priſoner under their protection.

This is the firſt teſtimony, which Pilate gave of our Lord's innocence, and is of great importance: For

Firſt, This witneſs of our Saviour's innocence was a perſon in a public character, and bore the office of a judge.

(*b*) Chap. xxvii. 18.

Secondly, He was the Roman Emperor's vicegerent, and conſequently it was incumbent on him by his poſt, capitally to puniſh all rebellious and ſeditious perſons.

Thirdly, He was quite impartial in this affair, and acted without being prejudiced either by hatred or love to Jeſus.

Fourthly, He gave this remarkable teſtimony of his innocence, after having heard his cauſe, ſtrictly examined the priſoner.

Fifthly, He did it voluntarily and freely from his own conviction, and not at the requeſt of any other perſon.

Laſtly, By this declaration of Chriſt's innocence, he at the ſame time repreſented the ſentence of death which the Sanhedrim had already paſt on him as an act of cruelty and injuſtice. From theſe circumſtances which followed Chriſt's good confeſſion we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. The doctrine of the regal dignity of Chriſt has always been ridiculed by the world.

Pilate thought it the height of extravagance, that a mean perſon, who was bound as a common criminal, without money or ſoldiers to execute any thing of importance, ſhould ſet himſelf up for a king; and ſtill more extraordinary, that he ſhould expect to become the ſovereign and conqueror of the world, by bearing witneſs to the truth. This the heathen Governor laughed at in his heart, and thus ridiculed this noble confeſſion of Chriſt concerning his kingly dignity.

dignity. The followers of Chriſt, in imitation of their Saviour, muſt willingly ſuffer themſelves to be ridiculed and deſpiſed; being aſſured that though they are not honoured by the world, yet that, after being ridiculed and reviled here, they ſhall at laſt reign with Chriſt, and ſit on his throne.

2. The ſincere love of truth is ſeldom found among the great, the rich, the wiſe, and prudent of this world.

God has ſaid, 'he requireth truth in the 'inward parts (*c*)', and exhorts us to love the truth (*d*); but where ſhall one find the love of truth in the world? for 'truth is fallen in the 'ſtreet, and equity cannot enter; the truth 'faileth, and he that departeth from evil mak-'eth himſelf a prey (*e*).' The love of truth is found more particularly wanting among the great and powerful of this world, who look upon truth, and particularly the truths of religion, as ſomething below their regard, and not worth enquiring after.

Thus the ſcene continues the ſame in our days, as it was before Pilate's judgment-ſeat. On one ſide ſtood the bleſſed Jeſus in defence of the truth, which he maintained, and at laſt ſealed with his blood; on the other ſide ſtood the Jews in oppoſition to the truth, which they hated and perſecuted in the perſon and doctrine of Chriſt, and ſought to oppreſs by lies and calumnies; and between theſe ſtood Pilate ri-

(*c*) Pſ. li. 6. (*d*) Zec. viii. 19. (*e*) Iſa. lix. 14, 15.

diculing both parties, and making a jeſt of both Jeſus and the Jews. Thus in our days theſe three parties, with regard to the truth of religion, ſtill exiſt. Some have a ſenſe of the tranſcendent value of truth; they eſteem it a precious gift of God, and as an invaluable jewel which he has committed to mankind; and accordingly they openly profeſs it, and are ready to ſacrifice their lives and fortunes, and all that is dear and valuable, in defence of it. Others ſhew themſelves declared enemies of the truth, and endeavour to ſuppreſs it, by changing it into error and falſhood, and hate and perſecute the profeſſors of it as obſtinate heretics. Others again obſerve a culpable neutrality, ridiculing both parties, and pretending that they are equally in the wrong, and give themſelves too much trouble about truth. The controverſies about truth appear to them as mere cavils about words; and if matters go well with them, if they enjoy riches, honours, and pleaſures, it is the leaſt of their care how it fares with truth.

Thoſe who are regardleſs of truth, and look upon one religion as good as another, are for the moſt part, indeed, to be found among the rich and mighty of this world; who look upon it as the characteriſtic of prudence to ſwim with the ſtream, and to have no farther concern with truth than as it may promote their preſent intereſt. Hence it is not to be wondered at, that God ſhould permit ſuch errors to reign in the world, not only among the mean and illiterate,

terate, but alſo among perſons of the greateſt learning and abilities, who are looked on as lights of the world and pillars of the ſtate. The cauſe of this is aſſigned by St. Paul in theſe words: 'They received not the love of the 'truth, that they might be ſaved; for this 'cauſe God ſhall ſend on them ſtrong delu-'ſion, that they ſhould believe a lie; that 'they all might be condemned who believed 'not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighte-'ouſneſs (*f*).' It is no more than juſt and equitable, that they who make a jeſt of truth, ſhould be deprived of its effulgent light, and caſt into outer darkneſs; where, as a puniſhment, they muſt give credit to fictions and lying words, ſince they refuſe to give God the honour due unto his name, and to acquieſce in the teſtimony of his ſacred Word. Hence alſo it happens, that the great, the wiſe, and powerful of this world drop off like unripe fruit, and deſert to the camp of Antichriſt, not only in times of perſecution for the ſake of the Goſpel, or when any danger is to be apprehended; but alſo when they can promote their temporal advantage, or get a ſtep higher in the world, by ſuch a deſertion of the truth. * This ſcandalous indifference for the truth likewiſe prevails among the lower claſs of people, the generality of whom are more taken up in providing

* In this paragraph the Author alludes to thoſe who deſert the Proteſtant cauſe in Germany, being allured by the Popiſh party, and gained over to their Church, by promiſes of preferment, &c. of which there are too many inſtances. *W.*

(*f*) Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12.

for

for the neceſſities of life, than in enquiring how they may obtain a true knowledge of the truth of the Goſpel. It is God's expreſs Will, 'that all 'men ſhould come to the knowledge of the 'truth (*g*). But theſe perſons think, that to enquire after religious truths does not belong to them; and as for the learned, they may diſpute to the day of judgment which religion is the beſt: But for their part they will keep to that in which they were born and educated, and in which their anceſtors lived before them. Thus many Proteſtants continue to argue while they do not ſee any opportunity of bettering their condition, by embracing a falſe religion. But when ſuch a temptation preſents itſelf, they undervalue the truth and embrace error, without examining into the merits of both religions.

3. Candid laymen are generally ſooner convinced of the innocence of the ſervants of God, than bigotted eccleſiaſtics, who are of a contrary opinion.

Pilate perceived that Jeſus was innocent, when the chief Prieſts and Scribes, who were blinded by prejudice, and inflamed with paſſion, would not be convinced. This is ſtill the caſe in the world. Stateſmen and lay-magiſtrates are ſooner convinced of the innocence of the witneſſes of Truth, than their eccleſiaſtical judges and adverſaries, who, though they are in a ſpiritual office, are ſtrangers to the ſpiritual life; nor are they taught

(*g*) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

of

of God. But alas! this conviction had no ſalutary effect on Pilate; for he proceeded no farther, but turns his back on the ſelf-exiſtent Truth, and aſks, What is truth? And though he was conſcious of Chriſt's innocence, yet he delivered him up to the barbarous cruelty of his enemies. Few, indeed, will expoſe themſelves to any inconveniency for the ſake of the perſecuted members of Chriſt. When the men of this world are under any apprehenſions, that by protecting their innocence they may ſubject themſelves to ſuſpicions and an evil report, or make themſelves enemies among the Great, they do not chooſe to interpoſe in their defence. Woe to them, who for their own private intereſt moleſt and perſecute the innocent! In order to atone for this depravity of mankind, Chriſt Jeſus, the everglorious Son of God, permitted himſelf to be thus treated, to the inexpreſſible comfort of his members, when they come to ſuffer the like ill treatment for his ſake.

II.

We come, in the next place, to conſider what followed our Saviour's confeſſion, with regard to his accuſers. By the confeſſion which our bleſſed Lord made concerning his kingdom, *&c.* they were ſtill more irritated; for they would by no means have it thought, that they had condemned an innocent man, and delivered him up to Pilate. St. Mark ſays, that the chief Prieſts accuſed him of many things. They not only repeated their former charge; but

but enlarged and aggravated the accuſation, by many new and fictitious articles. They concluded, that the greater number of crimes they laid to his charge, the more probability there was of overwhelming our Saviour's innocence; that if one complaint ſhould not incenſe Pilate againſt him, perhaps another might prove more effectual; and laſtly, that if one ſingle charge by itſelf ſhould not have the deſired effect, yet all the articles taken together might turn the ſcale againſt the innocent Jeſus.

This was the contrivance of the chief Prieſts, and likewiſe, as St. Matthew adds, of the Elders of the people; and conſequently of all the heads of the Jewiſh Church, whom it moſtly concerned to ſupport and defend their carnal authority, which had been weakened by the ſpiritual doctrines of Chriſt. The beſt way to compaſs their ends they imagined would be by removing Jeſus out of the way, that he might no longer oppoſe their hypocriſy by his preaching. But as Pilate had witneſſed, and probably cauſed it to be proclaimed by a herald, that he found no guilt in the Man, they were the more provoked; ſo that Pilate's declaration of our bleſſed Saviour's innocence, like oil poured on the fire, the more inflamed their minds, and cauſed louder exclamations againſt Jeſus. Hence we learn the following truths.

1. It is the uſual ſtratagem of the world to accumulate falſe accuſations againſt the witneſſes of the Truth.

It

It is ſaid, 'They accuſed Jeſus of many 'things.' This is a wicked device which the enemies of Truth, both in the Pagan and Popiſh perſecutions, have conſtantly practiſed *. What a hideous groupe of calumnies did the Pope's adherent's vent againſt Luther! ſo that one cannot but wonder where the lying Spirit could collect all its materials for ſuch abſurd accuſations, as they invented to aſperſe this glorious inſtrument of God †?

2. As we have heaped ſin upon ſin, ſo in our Saviour's ſufferings, one accuſation upon another was brought againſt him.

What innumerable ſins have been the conſequence of the firſt Fall! Hence St. Paul ſays, 'By one man's diſobedience many are made 'ſinners (*h*).' How has the venom, which lurked in the diſobedience of our firſt Parents, ſpread itſelf into numberleſs channels, and infected their unhappy deſcendants! How many millions of dreadful ſins have ſprung from that corrupt fountain! And we ſtill daily ſee men adding ſin to ſin, 'till the meaſure is full, ſo as at laſt to run over. The Son of God ſuffered one accuſation upon another to be heaped on him, in order to cover the multitude of our ſins. But this is a comfort which can be properly valued only by an awakened conſcience; to which Satan lays open ſuch a large and dreadful catalogue of ſins, that the ſinner is

* Vide CHRISTIANI KORTHOLTI Paganum obtrectatorem; et ORIGENEM *adverſus* Celſum.

† See MULLER's *Lutherus Defenſus*, and his *Defenſio Lutheri Defenſi*. (*h*) Rom. v. 19.

aſto-

aſtoniſhed at the multitude of his tranſgreſſions, and cries out, 'My ſins are more in 'number than the hairs of my head, or the 'ſand on the ſea-ſhore (*i*).' When the ſinner ſtands thus aghaſt, and terrified at the number and heinouſneſs of his ſins, then he finds comfort in the multitude of accuſations heaped on his innocent Redeemer. He may be well aſſured, that his heavenly Father will forgive his numberleſs ſins; and that he ſhall be ſafe under the defence and protection of his Saviour's innocence, whatever accuſations Satan may bring againſt him.

3. The authority of a high poſt or dignity is often abuſed, in order to gain credit to falſe accuſations.

The accuſations brought againſt the bleſſed Jeſus were mere calumnies and falſities; but as they were preferred by the chief Prieſts and Elders of the people, they imagined that their high ſtations would induce Pilate the ſooner to give credit to their falſe charge. This is ſtill the way in the perſecutions of true Chriſtians. When the enemies of the Truth have on their ſide perſons of great note and learning, who join with them and defend their proceedings, they think that whatever comes from them muſt be received as divine Oracles; and that what is wanting in proof of the accuſations, muſt be made up by the authority of the learned or dignified accuſer. Our bleſſed Lord in his

(*i*) Pſalm xl. 13. Prayer of Manaſſeh.

ſufferings experienced many diſadvantages from the dignity of his enemies, which made an unhappy impreſſion even on the minds of his own diſciples. For after his reſurrection, they ſeem to diſtruſt his promiſes, ſaying, 'the 'chief Prieſts and our Rulers delivered him to 'be condemned to death, and have crucified 'him; but we truſted that it had been he, 'who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael (*k*). Thus their weak minds were not a little offended at the high rank and reputation of thoſe, who had promoted their Maſter's death. This has been often the caſe with the faithful members of Jeſus Chriſt. At the Council of Conſtance, (which was held about a hundred years before the Reformation begun by Luther) where John Huſs was unjuſtly condemned to be burnt as a Heretic, his Imperial Majeſty, ſeveral Embaſſadors, three Electors, a great number of Princes, three Patriarchs, twenty-eight Cardinals, and a hundred and fifty-five Biſhops, beſides Divines and Civilians from all parts of Europe, were preſent *; and yet by ſuch an auguſt aſſembly of great perſonages was truth condemned, and innocence oppreſſed. Who will therefore take offence at ſuch things, or be awed and deterred from the confeſſion of Truth? The way has been long ſince ſmoothed for us, to get over this rock of offence by Chriſt himſelf and his bleſſed Martyrs.

(*k*) Luke xxiv. 20.

* Vide Sleidanum de Statu Relig. Lib. II. p. 40.

III.

Laſtly, We are to enquire what followed after our Saviour's good confeſſion, with regard to Chriſt himſelf. The bleſſed Jeſus was ſilent on this occaſion, to the aſtoniſhment of all who were preſent. Hence we may obſerve,

Firſt, That mention is made of it in Pilate's words to Jeſus; for he wonders at his ſilence, and in his ſurpriſe, aſks him this queſtion: 'Anſwereſt thou nothing? As if he had ſaid, Art thou quite inſenſible to thy own reputation and ſafety, ſince thy life and character are at ſtake? And doſt thou not hear thyſelf accuſed of crimes, which the law puniſhes with death? How canſt thou be ſilent at ſuch a criſis, and ſuffer thy enemies to accuſe thee without making any defence, or oppoſition to the charge they bring againſt thee? St. Matthew and St. Mark obſerve, that Pilate farther added, 'Heareſt thou not, how many things they witneſs againſt thee?' Hence it may, with ſome probability, be inferred, that the chief Prieſts and Elders brought witneſſes with them before Pilate, to back the indictment with their teſtimony. Notwithſtanding all this, our bleſſed Lord continued ſilent. It ſeems as if Pilate had ſome compaſſion on Jeſus, and imagined that his ſilence might proceed from fear and deſpondency, ſo that he would not preſume to ſpeak in his own defence; and therefore theſe words may be looked

looked upon as a permiſſion and encouragement to Jeſus to ſpeak his mind, and to vindicate himſelf in the beſt manner he could.

Secondly, We have here likewiſe an account of our bleſſed Lord's behaviour after theſe words of Pilate. The Evangeliſt informs us, that 'Jeſus anſwered him to never a word.' For neither the high rank of his accuſers, nor the heinouſneſs of the accuſation, nor yet Pilate's encouraging queſtion, could induce the bleſſed Jeſus to break his ſilence. He ſtood firm and immoveable as a rock, amidſt the outrageous fury of the Jews and Gentiles, and the tumultuous waves of their clamorous accuſations. Now this ſilence was founded both on propriety, and juſtice. For

1. He had before made an ample confeſſion of the truth: But Pilate had ridiculed the declaration he had made, and conſequently rendered himſelf unworthy of any farther information; for he, that is not faithful in the grace he has received, will have no more intruſted to him.

2. He knew that the judge himſelf was perfectly convinced of his innocence.

3. The charge which the Jews alledged againſt him conſiſted of things, that were either manifeſtly falſe, or of ſuch a nature, that they did properly fall under the cognizance of Pilate.

4. Chriſt was not willing, by his reply, to give the Jews any further occaſion of ſinning by additional lies, and repeated accuſations.

5. He was deſirous to ſhew, that he was from his heart willing to die for us, by ſuffering the ſentence of death to be executed on him, without offering any plea in arreſt of judgment.

6. Laſtly, He was determined to fulfil the prophecies which had before declared, that 'as a 'ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he 'would not open his mouth (*l*).'

Thirdly, We have here an account of the effect which our Saviour's ſilence had on Pilate. Concerning this circumſtance, we are told, that 'the Governor marvelled greatly.' It muſt have appeared ſomething ſtrange to Pilate, that a criminal, who was brought before his judgment-ſeat, ſhould be ſilent at ſuch a juncture. For thoſe who have the worſt cauſe are generally moſt importunate, and loud in juſtifying themſelves before a court of judicature. Pilate therefore wondered at this man's extreme timidity, or rather magnanimity, ſince he ſeemed to deſpiſe all the terrible accuſations brought againſt him, and ſhewed by his ſilence that he was ready to ſuffer death. To conclude the ſubject, we ſhall here make the following obſervations.

1. Though God frequently permits impious men and hypocrites to be diſappointed in their

(*l*) Iſaiah liii. 7. Compare Pſa. xxxviii. 14, 15.

wicked

wicked deſigns; yet they ſeldom deſiſt from their evil purpoſes, and leave their wicked ways.

The chief Prieſts and Scribes had already been diſappointed by their falſe witneſſes, when they examined Jeſus before their Council; one evidence contradicted another, and their depoſitions were ſo incoherent, that they afforded no ſufficient proof to condemn Jeſus as guilty of the charge. Nevertheleſs, though the Divine Providence had baffled this wicked attempt, yet they perſevere in it, and come to Pilate, attended by other falſe witneſſes; and therefore as truth did not avail them, they have recourſe to lies and falſhood. This depravity is ſtill too common among men. How often does God permit ſinners to be diſappointed; ſo that their ſins bring ridicule and diſgrace upon them, or ruins their ſubſtance and health? How often does a drunkard in his ebriety commit ſuch things as expoſe him to contempt and diſgrace, or by his intemperance contract ſome ſevere diſtemper? Yet on the firſt invitation of his debauched companions, as ſoon as the long-ſuffering of God has permitted him to recover his ſtrength, he returns to that ſame vice which had occaſioned his illneſs. How often is a perſon who is entangled in the ſnares of impurity detected, and his leud practices come to light? How often is the thief ſurpriſed in the very fact, and in conſequence of it, publicly undergo ſome ignominious puniſhment, yet both

the one and the other ſtill go on in their wickedneſs; only for the future they uſe more caution, that they may not be ſurpriſed. Thus did this depravity of the human heart make a part of our Saviour's ſufferings; and we may obſerve it in his enemies and accuſers, as in a mirrour of injuſtice and obduracy.

2. Chriſt by his ſilence before Pilate appeared in the form of a ſinner, and atoned for 'our clamorous importunities, and falſe juſtifica-'tions, in our own defence.'

When a ſinner is awakened by his conſcience, and his ſecret ſins are placed before his eyes, he no longer pretends to excuſe and juſtify himſelf; but lays his hand on his mouth, and owns himſelf guilty. Now Chriſt, having permitted the ſins of the whole world to be imputed to him at the Divine Tribunal, by his ſilence on this occaſion before a human Tribunal, put on the appearance of a convicted ſinner, who, under the condemnation of his conſcience, dares not open his mouth. And as our petulant tongues are ſo ready, and our voices ſo loud in palliating our ſins, and juſtifying our iniquitous proceedings, when, perhaps, our heart at the ſame time is convinced that we are guilty, our bleſſed Saviour was ſilent for the expiation of this depravity of human nature. Let us therefore thankfully acknowledge, that our Redeemer was pleaſed to be ſilent in our ſtead, and praiſe him for this inſtance of his love. Let us, out of reverence to his ſilence

before

before Pilate, henceforth ceaſe to juſtify our faults, and excuſe our miſdoings. Let us ſay with holy Job, 'I have uttered that I under-'ſtood not, therefore I abhor myſelf, and 'repent in duſt and aſhes (*m*).' Oh, that we may thus judge ourſelves! and then we ſhall not be judged, and condemned of the Lord.

THE PRAYER.

WE praiſe thee, O faithful and ever-living Saviour, for all the ſeveral ſpecies of ſufferings which thou didſt patiently endure, in order to procure for us the forgiveneſs of our manifold ſins and impieties before the Divine Tribunal. Bleſs, O Lord, to our Souls the conſideration of this part of thy ſufferings. May every inſult, every indignity and unjuſt treatment, to which thou haſt ſubmitted in our ſtead, be for our eternal advantage! When we acknowledge our guilt, and confeſs our ſins, clothe us with the ſpotleſs robe of thy innocence. When the conſciouſneſs of our numberleſs miſdeeds alarm and terrify us, ſo as to render us incapable of pleading for ourſelves, do thou ſpeak for us, as our Patron and Interceſſor. Make us ſenſible that thou art the only refuge of terrified conſciences; ſo that flying to thee we may find life, ſafety, and reſt, and be acquitted from all accuſations brought

(*m*) Chap. xlii. 3, 6.

againſt us at the tribunal of thy heavenly Father. Grant this for the ſake of thy name. Amen.

CONSIDERATION VIII.

The ſufferings of CHRIST *before* Herod.

'(a) AND the chief Prieſts were the more 'fierce, ſaying, He ſtirreth up the 'people, teaching throughout all Jewry, be-'ginning from Galilee to this place. When 'Pilate heard of Galilee, he aſked, Whether 'the man were a Galilean? And as ſoon as he 'knew that he belonged to Herod's juriſdiction, 'he ſent him to Herod, who himſelf was alſo 'at Jeruſalem at that time. And when Herod 'ſaw Jeſus, he was exceeding glad: For he 'was deſirous to ſee him of a long ſeaſon, be-'cauſe he had heard many things of him; 'and he hoped to have ſeen ſome miracle done 'by him. Then he queſtioned with him in 'many words; but Jeſus anſwered him no-'thing. And the chief Prieſts and Scribes 'ſtood and vehemently accuſed him. And 'Herod and his men of war ſet him at nought, 'and mocked him; and arrayed him in a 'gorgeous robe, and ſent him again to Pilate. 'And the ſame day Pilate and Herod were

(a) Luke xxiii. 5—12.

'made

'made friends together; for before they were 'at enmity between themſelves.'

Theſe words exhibit to us the ſufferings of the Lord Jeſus before King Herod: And here we may obſerve

Firſt, The occaſion of this part of our bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings.

Secondly, The indignities he ſuffered before Herod.

I.

This part of Chriſt's ſufferings was occaſioned partly by our bleſſed Lord's accuſers, and partly by Pilate.

The accuſers of Chriſt gave occaſion to it, by mentioning the province of Galilee in their accuſation of our bleſſed Saviour. When the chief Prieſts obſerved that Pilate fluctuated in his opinion, and not only ſeemed to be convinced of our Lord's innocence, but had made a public declaration of it, they were ſo exaſperated that they aſſailed the bleſſed Jeſus with a violent tempeſt of freſh accuſations. But when our bleſſed Lord, to Pilate's great aſtoniſhment, would not make any anſwer, they grew the more clamorous and importunate, and repreſented the prudent ſilence of the Lamb of God as proceeding from a conſciouſneſs, that he had nothing to ſay in anſwer to the charge brought againſt him, or to urge by way of excuſe or juſtification. Accordingly

'they were the more fierce (*b*);' and arming themſelves with freſh effrontery, they began to urge Pilate with new calumnies and ſlanders. To theſe, however, the dignity of their rank and ſanctity of their office gave the neceſſary weight and importance; and as they were deſtitute of legal proofs, they endeavoured to prevail on him to put Jeſus to death by tumultuous clamours and repeated vociferations.

As the Jews had nothing new to urge that had any appearance of truth, ſo as to induce Pilate to comply with their deſires, they repeated their former charge of rebellion; but they clothed it in other words, with the addition of a new circumſtance which could not fail of having ſome weight with Pilate. They had before alledged, 'We found this fellow 'perverting the people.' But now their plea is, 'He ſtirreth up the people.' As Pilate had not been able to find the leaſt trace of his having occaſioned a public inſurrection, they ſeem to inſiſt, that if he had not entirely alienated the minds of the people, ſo as to make them withdraw their allegiance from the Roman Government; yet he ſtirred them up, and occaſioned among them many dangerous movements, which might at laſt terminate in an open revolt. They here, in the preſent tenſe, ſay * 'He ſtirreth up the people,' to ſhew that Jeſus made it his chief buſineſs to

(*b*) Verſe 5. * ἀνασείει.

that

that very time to excite the people to rebel, and that but a few days before, he had entered Jeruſalem in a public manner, which put the whole city in a ferment (*c*).

As for the manner in which Jeſus is ſaid to have ſtirred up the people, they add that it was by 'teaching;' and conſequently they accuſe him, that he had conveyed ſeditious principles with his doctrine, and ſo artfully mingled that pernicious venom with the religious errors which he taught, that his hearers had greedily imbibed them both. They further obſerve, that he taught not only in one place, but through out all Judea; ſo that the whole country, which hitherto had been the only ſeat of pure religion, was over-run with his ſeditious and erroneous doctrines.

Laſtly, By adding theſe words, 'beginning 'from Galilee to this place,' they give a ſpecimen both of their craft, and their malice. Their craft appears by their endeavouring to diſcharge themſelves of the obligation of bringing proofs of the charge againſt Chriſt. Hence they appeal to Galilee, which lay at a diſtance on the confines of Judea, from whence witneſſes could not ſo ſoon be produced. They likewiſe ſhewed their malice by theſe words: For they intended to give Pilate a worſe opinion of Jeſus, becauſe he was of that province; the Galileans at that time being looked upon as a ſeditious, turbulent, and diſſatisfied ſet of

(*c*) Matth. xxi. 10. ἐσείσθη πασα ἡ πολις.

people.

people. Some years before, a Galilean, whoſe name was Judas *, had excited a revolt, on account of ſome new tax impoſed upon that country (*d*). Even Pilate himſelf, not long before, had been put to ſome trouble by the Galileans; and when ſome of the revolters came to Jeruſalem to ſacrifice according to cuſtom †, he maſſacred them in the temple; ſo that their blood was mingled with that of their ſacrifices (*e*).

By alledging before Pilate that Jeſus had begun to teach in Galilee, which ſhould rather have reminded them of the accompliſhment of the prophecy of Iſaiah (*f*), the chief Prieſts intended to intimate, that Jeſus was a native of Galilee, and by this means to raiſe a prejudice againſt him, as being one of the ſeditious Galileans. For, as they obſerved to Pilate, if he was not afraid to cauſe ſuch a commotion at his public entry into Jeruſalem, which was the reſidence of the Roman Governor, what may he not be ſuppoſed to have attempted in the remote northern parts of Judea. Theſe

* See Joſephus's Jewiſh Antiquities, B. xviii. C. 1, 2.

(*d*) Acts v. 37,

† *Ita* Jo. HARDUINUS, *in* operibus ſelectis, p. 380. *qui iſtos Galilæos fuiſſe putat ſectatores Judæ Galilæi, qui Hieroſolymis in templo, quo illi ad ſacrificandum convenerant, ſex ferè menſibus ante Chriſti mortem, in feſto expiationis trucidati, Pilato jubente, fuerint. Alii tamen homines innocentes, à patria Galilæos vocatos, fuiſſe contendunt. Conf.* AUG. THEOD. HOFFCUNZII *diſſ.* de ἀνθρωποθυσια Pilati, *Lipſiæ*, 1721.

(*e*) Luke xiii. 1.

(*f*) Chap. ix. 1, 2. Compare Matth. iv. 13—16.

infe-

inferences were drawn from probabilities and conjectures; and ſuch falſe concluſions are generally influenced by the prince of darkneſs, who knows how to take advantage of them, for the enlargement of his kingdom, and the oppreſſion of Chriſt and his cauſe. By this hint, however, the accuſers of the bleſſed Jeſus were the occaſion of ſending him to Herod, becauſe Galilee was under his juriſdiction.

Pilate the more readily embraced this opportunity, as he had a ſtrong deſire of getting clear of this troubleſome affair in a handſome manner. Therefore, on hearing that Chriſt had begun to teach in Galilee, and had ſpent a great part of his time in that country, he concluded that he was a native of Galilee, and immediately aſked our Saviour's accuſers, 'Whether the man were a Galilean?' The Jews made no difficulty to anſwer in the affirmative, in hopes of rendering Jeſus more odious to Pilate; who poſſibly might now ſuſpect him of being one of the followers of Judas the Galilean, who, but a little time before, had committed ſo many diſorders in that country. Pilate ſuppoſing, by this anſwer of the Jews, that Jeſus was a Galilean, and conſequently a ſubject of King Herod, ſent him to that Prince, who being a Jew, probably was then at Jeruſalem on account of the Paſſover. This Herod, who was ſurnamed Antipas, was the ſon of Herod * who maſſacred the innocent chil-

* By Malthace.

dren

dren at Bethlehem and its territories. He was the ſame Herod, who had cauſed John the Baptiſt to be beheaded (*g*); who had likewiſe before endeavoured to deſtroy Jeſus (*h*), probably, from an abſurd notion that the ſoul of John the Baptiſt was tranſmigrated into him. Now Herod's juriſdiction particularly extended over that part of Judea which was called Galilee (hence he is ſtiled Tetrarch of Galilee (*i*)) and on this account frequent diſputes might be ſuppoſed to ariſe between him and the Roman Governor Pilate, occaſioned by encroachments on each others rights and prerogatives.

To this Herod the bleſſed Jeſus was now ſent; and in this proceeding Pilate's views were political; but at the ſame time, they were wicked. In the firſt place, he thought that by this means he ſhould with honour free himſelf of this troubleſome affair about Jeſus of Nazareth. He thought this a very proper expedient to avoid condemning a perſon whom he looked upon as innocent, and incurring the hatred of the Jewiſh clergy and people. He concluded that as Herod was a Jew, he could better decide this cauſe, which ſeemed principally to relate to the Jewiſh religion. He thought that Herod would certainly be offended with the chief Prieſts, becauſe they had overlooked him, and had not immediately brought

(*g*) Matth. xiv. 10. (*h*) Luke xiii. 31, 32.
(*i*) Luke iii. 1.

their

their priſoner before his judgment-ſeat; and therefore it was not probable that he would order Jeſus to be put to death, out of complaiſance to them: And in caſe he ſhould, Pilate imagined that he ſhould have no hand in condemning the innocent. Pilate was likewiſe pleaſed to think, that he ſhould at the ſame time pay a compliment to Herod; ſo that, on another occaſion, Herod might gratify him in return. Such in all probability, were his views and deſigns in this proceeding.

However, the greateſt injuſtice lay concealed under this pretence of political prudence. For Pilate thus delivered up an innocent and righteous man, whom it was his duty not only to acquit at his tribunal, but alſo to protect againſt the rage and malice of his enemies. He ſent the bleſſed Jeſus to a judge, who, it was well known, had before ſought his life, and had rendered himſelf odious to all good men by the ſcandalous and unjuſt execution of John the Baptiſt *. On this account, the accuſers of the Lord Jeſus deſired nothing more, than to be referred to Herod; being perſuaded, that it would be no difficult matter to obtain his order for putting Jeſus to death. From this account of the occaſion of our bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings before Herod, we ſhall deduce the following truths.

Firſt, The enemies of true piety at preſent deal with the members of Chriſt, as they for-

* See Joſephus's Jewiſh Antiquities, B. xviii. C. 7.

merly

merly did with the Head. This we ſhall endeavour to prove as follows, from the words here explained.

1. As the enemies of our bleſſed Lord conſtrued his ſilence to be a ſign of a bad cauſe, and on that account urged their groundleſs accuſations with the more boldneſs; ſo it is juſt the ſame in our days. When the faithful ſervants of God forbear anſwering the calumnies, and libels diſperſed abroad againſt them, accounting it an unprofitable waſte of time, the world cries out, "We may ſee what kind "of conſciences theſe people have, who have "not a word to ſay in their own defence. "If they were innocent, doubtleſs they would "not let ſuch things go unanſwered." Thus they ſlander the more boldly, and publiſh new accuſations without the leaſt ſenſe of diſcretion or modeſty.

2. As our bleſſed Saviour's enemies were continually repeating their former accuſations, only dreſſing them in a new garb; ſo is it ſtill the way of perſecutors and detractors who renew old calumnies which had long ſince been refuted by the moſt convincing apologies, and put them forth into the world under a new appearance.

3. As the accuſers of Chriſt charged him with moving ſeditions and tumults, in order to inſtigate the civil Power againſt him; ſo at preſent, ill deſigning men infuſe an ill opinion of the good and virtuous into the men of power.

power. They repreſent them as conceited, ſelf-willed, obſtinate perſons, who are wanting in due reſpect to their Sovereigns; who ſpeak evil of dignities and magiſtrates; who occaſion all kinds of trouble and diſturbances in ſtates, and would introduce a new ſyſtem of religion; ſo that it were better for government to baniſh them out of their reſpective dominions.

4. As the enemies of Chriſt accuſe his doctrine as tainted with the poiſon of pernicious errors; ſo now unneceſſary admonitions are given againſt ſuch pretended ſecret poiſon. The enemies of the truth cannot deny, that the writings of thoſe authors they condemn contain a great deal of good; but they pretend, without any juſt grounds, that it is mixt with ſo much poiſon as not to be read without extreme danger.

5. As the accuſers of the bleſſed Jeſus charged him, that at leaſt he prepared the minds of the people for a revolt, though it was not actually broke out into open rebellion; ſo in our days, the pure doctrine of Chriſt is accuſed as the foundation of all hereſy, and pernicious errors; and therefore the followers of Antichriſt pretend, that the growing evil is to be oppoſed in time, and that the ſparks which lie concealed in the embers muſt be quenched, leſt they kindle a conflagration, in which the church and ſtate may be involved.

6. As the accuſers of Chriſt repreſented him as one of that rebellious multitude, which had

made an inſurrection in Galilee, and refuſed to pay tribute to the Roman Emperor; ſo it is in our times. Thus Luther was charged by his adverſaries with acting in concert with Thomas Muntzer; and thus many faithful ſervants of God are accuſed of holding the tenets of the ancient or modern heretics, and of propagating almoſt the ſame impious doctrines.

7. Laſtly, As the enemies of our bleſſed Saviour mingled ſome truths with their falſe accuſations; as, for inſtance, that Jeſus began to teach in Galilee; but perverted thoſe truths to a very wicked purpoſe; ſo likewiſe many things are laid to the charge of the faithful ſervants of God, which are really true; but theſe are mixed with falſe imputations, and ſuch impious deſigns as never entered into their thoughts. By this conformity between the ancient and modern oppoſers of truth, we ſee that the ſcene continues much the ſame to this day, though the perſons who act this baſe part are changed from time to time. But happy is it for us, that Satan began at the Head and Captain of our Salvation, ſince by that means the way is paved for the members, that they may get over the offence of the croſs. Praiſed be the Lord Jeſus for ſubmitting to all theſe accuſations for our ſake.

Secondly, Political prudence, unleſs it be governed by the ſuperior light of God's Word, has always ſhewn itſelf an enemy to Chriſt and his croſs.

Of

Of this we here ſee a remarkable inſtance in Pilate. The political prudence, which he ſhewed on this occaſion, was a carnal prudence, tending to increaſe the ſufferings of the innocent Jeſus, and expoſe him to farther inſults; though God at the ſame time conducted theſe ſeveral incidents, ſo as to accompliſh his decrees. For

1. By this was fulfilled that prophecy concerning the Meſſiah, 'The kings of the earth 'ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel 'together againſt the Lord, and againſt the 'Meſſiah, or his Anointed (*k*)'.

2. By this circumſtance Chriſt's innocence became ſtill more conſpicuous, and more publicly known.

3. By this delay of the proceedings againſt our bleſſed Saviour, his enemies and accuſers had ſome time to reflect on what they were about, before they plunged themſelves deeper in blood-guiltineſs. However, theſe were not the effects of Pilate's ſagacity or prudence; but of the Divine Wiſdom, which directs every thing to good and wiſe ends. This is too often the behaviour of magiſtrates and judges in our days. Political men will not put themſelves to the leaſt inconveniency for the ſake of the innocent and good; and when they might, and ought to protect them, they are given up to the popular rage. This is uſually covered with ſome outward pretence, while the mind has

(*k*) Pſalm ii 2. Acts iv. 27.

another object in view. This is accounted prudence and ſagacity by the world; but in the ſight of God, it is folly and ſin. Without the light of Divine Grace, no man can diſcharge a civil poſt or worldly employment, ſo as to preſerve his integrity, and a conſcience void of offence. The power of darkneſs will prove too ſtrong for a man before he is aware of it, unleſs he is ſupported by power from on high. What great reaſon therefore, have Civilians and Politicians to apply to the living God for the guidance of his Spirit.

Thirdly, Chriſt, by theſe circumſtances of his paſſion, was to expiate many kinds of ſin. He has atoned

1. For our ſuppreſſions of good motions when they ariſe in the mind, and our hypocriſy in this particular. Therefore he ſuffered himſelf to be charged with raiſing rebellions and commotions among the people.

2. He has atoned for the turbulent and rebellious motions, which frequently riſe in our hearts againſt the Divine Law, to which the carnal mind will not be ſubject; and likewiſe againſt the ordinance of the civil Power.

3. He has atoned for our voluntary ſubjection to the power of the prince of darkneſs. Therefore he ſubmitted to be brought before the civil Powers, and even before Herod, a foreign prince to whoſe government he did not properly belong, being a native of Judea and

and not of Galilee, and was mocked and reviled before them.

4. He atoned for our fear of man, in omitting to protect truth and innocence.

5. He atoned for the abuſe of the Sovereign Power, by which we endeavour to accompliſh our wicked deſign by rendering our enemy obnoxious to the government, when it is not in our power to cruſh him. All theſe, and the like ſins, concurred to occaſion this part of our bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings, and will for his ſake be forgiven, if we duly repent of them, and believe in him.

II.

We now come to conſider the ſufferings and indignities which Jeſus endured before King Herod. Our bleſſed Lord had, indeed, already ſuffered a great deal. He had been led about the city in bonds, as a gazing-ſtock to be reviled and inſulted, and had been brought in that manner from Pilate to Herod. It is hardly to be ſuppoſed that the proceſſion was ſlow, and that they led him along gently. On the contrary, it is more probable that the rude multitude dragged him, and puſhed him, in a brutiſh manner; ſince they were impatient to have the trial over. Thus the ſacred body of our bleſſed Saviour, which, the night before, had ſweated blood during his mental agony, was now the more enfeebled by this

rude treatment, and was after all this, on the ſame day, obliged to drag the Croſs after him to mount Golgotha. But the ſufferings which Chriſt endured before Herod properly conſiſted of theſe four particulars.

1. In the diſadvantageous opinion which Herod conceived of him. This profligate and voluptuous Prince looked on our Saviour as a ſorcerer, who performed ſurpriſing wonders by his ſkill in magic. On this account he was exceeding glad when he was informed, that this famous magician, as he thought, of whom he had already heard ſuch ſtrange things, was to be brought before him. He made no doubt that he ſhould be entertained with the ſight of many wonderful performances, which he had only heard of before from other perſons. To hear the pure doctrine of the bleſſed Jeſus, and to be inſtructed by him how to live in chaſtity, righteouſneſs, and holineſs, was no part of Herod's deſire; but his impatience was to ſee Jeſus, being perſuaded that he would be very glad to exhibit the moſt ſurprizing ſpecimens of his art to a perſon of his high rank, in order to gain his favour, as a means for his deliverance. This unworthy idea, which Herod entertained of our bleſſed Saviour, is unqueſtionably to be reckoned as a part of his ſufferings. How deep was the abaſement of the Son of the moſt High! For as he was afterwards numbered among the tranſgreſſors; ſo here he ſuffers himſelf to be

reckoned among jugglers, ſorcerers, and magicians *, that he might open a way to grace and repentance for ſuch deluded engines of Satan.

2. The ſufferings of Chriſt before Herod further conſiſted in many unneceſſary, curious, and contemptuous queſtions, which were put to him. We are told by St. Luke, that Herod 'queſtioned him in many words,' the purport of which queſtions, and the manner of aſking them, the Evangeliſt has not ſpecified: and as they probably related to ſuch trivial and improper things, that Jeſus did not think them worth his notice, it may be preſumed, that his queſtions were ſuitable to his expectations of ſeeing Jeſus perform ſome magical wonders. It is not improbable that he enquired, Whether he was John the Baptiſt? Whether the ſoul of that prophet was transfuſed into Jeſus? What methods he took inſtantaneouſly to cure certain diſtempers? Whether he pretended to be the King of the Jews? Whether he laid any claim to the province of Galilee? How he could expect to make good his pretenſions? *&c.* beſides many ſarcaſtical queſtions concerning the mean appearance, and the prophetic and kingly office

* *Eandem ignominiam ſæpiùs paſſus eſt optimus Servator à* Judæis *Talmudicis, aliiſque, à* CELSO, PORPHYRIO, *&c. Quin et Chriſti cultoribus Magicas artes à maledico paganorum calamo exprobratas fuiſſe pluribus docet, calumniamque deterrimam refellit* B. CHRISTIANUS KORTHOLTUS, *in* Pagano Obtrectatore Lib. III. C. IV. p. 474.

of the bleſſed Jeſus. How ſenſibly muſt this have affected our bleſſed Lord! How muſt he have grieved to hear ſo many vain, idle, and ſarcaſtical queſtions; and this at a time when he was taken up with the moſt important, ſerious thoughts for reconciling heaven and earth, and, by the ſhedding of his precious blood, to eſtabliſh everlaſting peace between God and Man! He therefore neither returned any anſwer to Herod's queſtions, nor gratified his culpable curioſity by any ſigns or wonders. He would not caſt pearls before ſwine, nor uſe his Divine Power of working miracles to make a ſhow to entertain the wanton eyes of a voluptuous ſcoffer. He was likewiſe well aſſured, that the ſentence of death was not to be executed on him by Herod, the Jewiſh king, but by the Roman Governor; therefore he kept ſilence, that he might be the ſooner remanded back to his appointed judge.

3. Our bleſſed Saviour's ſufferings before Herod conſiſted alſo in the violent accuſations of his adverſaries. It is ſaid, by the Evangeliſt, 'the chief Prieſts and Scribes ſtood, and 'vehemently accuſed him.' They bent the bow of malice to its utmoſt ſtretch *; and laid their heads together †, to ſet forth their accuſations in the moſt probable, and at the ſame time, the moſt virulent manner. Here they may be ſuppoſed to have collected toge-

* ἐυτονως. à τεινω tendo, extendo. *W.*

† ἐμελετησαν meditati ſunt, ſtudebant. *W.*

ther

ther whatever they could find to object againſt Chriſt, not only relating to an inſurrection and revolt, but likewiſe concerning the article of hereſy. Thus a favourable opportunity preſented itſelf to Herod, to diſplay his zeal for the Jewiſh church and religion; for he ſtudied every way to ingratiate himſelf with the Jews, and for this purpoſe, had given himſelf the trouble of coming to Jeruſalem at this time on account of the feaſt of the Paſſover. Here doubtleſs they magnified to the utmoſt the great miſchiefs which they pretended, this man had done in Galilee, which was properly Herod's government: How ſome thouſands of the common people had gone frequently after him, and thus given themſelves up to an idle and diſorderly life, neglecting their families and reſpective callings; ſo that they became a burden to the Public. They probably repreſented, that this was the man whom his royal father, in his great wiſdom, was for deſtroying when he heard of his birth by the eaſtern Magi; and that at preſent, he had a favourable opportunity of ridding the Jewiſh church and ſtate of ſuch a pernicious heretic and rebel, and by that means of endearing his memory to lateſt poſterity. Theſe indeed are the motives, which the ſpirit of this world often finds ſucceſsful in exciting the minds of the Great and Powerful to the moſt cruel perſecutions.

4. Laſtly, The ſufferings of Chriſt before Herod likewiſe conſiſted in many barbarous inſults and mockeries. 'Herod and his men of war,' as the Evangeliſt informs us, 'ſet him at nought, 'and mocked him; and having arrayed him 'in a gorgeous robe, ſent him again to Pilate.' Herod reſented our bleſſed Lord's ſilence; looking upon it as a contempt of his dignity, that he would not ſo much as return an anſwer to the many queſtions he had aſked him; and therefore he was determined to make Jeſus feel the weight of his diſpleaſure, and accordingly mocked and abuſed him in a barbarous and inhuman manner. He not only inſulted our bleſſed Saviour with all manner of contumelious words, and opprobrious names, but ordered a gorgeous or a white robe * to be put on him, as a mock enſign of royalty; for the latter was the uſual habit worn at Rome by thoſe who ſtood candidates for the Conſulſhip, *&c.* In this garb of mock pageantry, he was firſt preſented to Herod's court as a laughing-ſtock, and then ſent back through the ſtreets of Jeruſalem to Pilate.

A white garment, indeed, was no reproach to the bleſſed Jeſus. He was the pure, unſpotted, and innocent Lamb of God, who was clear from all guilt; which Herod, undeſignedly and againſt his will, was obliged to acknowledge even by this mockery. He was

* ἐσθητα λαμπραν. veſtem ſplendidam, claram. *W.*

the

the King of kings: He was the Prince of Peace, and the conqueror of all his enemies (*l*). He was the Antitype of the High Prieſt of the Jewiſh church who, on the great day of atonement, went into the Holy of Holies clothed in a white veſtment. But of theſe myſteries Herod was entirely ignorant: He looked upon it as a ridicule on the ſacred perſon of Jeſus, and this white robe was put on him amidſt the loud laughters and brutal mockeries of Herod and his ſoldiers.

In this contemptuous indignity Herod firſt ſet the example. He deſpiſed Jeſus as a mean obſcure perſon, and one of no account *, whoſe head was ſtuffed with chimerical notions of royalty, though he had no power to execute his airy projects; and at the ſame time he mocked the bleſſed Jeſus, and treated him like a child † or an ideot. By this ſcandalous behaviour, however, he debaſed himſelf moſt; for to mock and inſult a helpleſs perſon, oppreſſed with grief and miſery, by no means becomes a magnanimous prince; on the contrary, it argues a moſt baſe and degenerate mind. His court we may be ſure were not wanting in imitating their ſovereign; particularly his guards ‡, who were then preſent, en-

(*l*) Rev. vi. 2. xix. 11. 14.

* ἐξουθενησας *eum pro nihilo habens*, ſetting him at nought, depreciating him. *W.*

† ἐμπαιξας illudens, ἀ παις puer. *W.*

‡ στρατευματα.

deavoured

deavoured to entertain him by all manner of ludicrous jeſts and grimaces, in contempt of the perſon of the bleſſed Jeſus.

Theſe execrable proceedings ſo highly pleaſed Herod, that he harboured no farther hatred againſt Pilate from that time. For the Evangeliſt adds, that 'Pilate and Herod were the ſame 'day made friends together, though before, 'they were at enmity between themſelves (*m*).' They had been more particularly inveterate againſt each other, ſince Pilate had cauſed ſome of Herod's ſubjects to be barbarouſly maſſacred at Jeruſalem. Thus Chriſt was to be the pledge of this reconciliation, and the means of renewing the friendſhip between theſe two great perſonages. But, at the ſame time, a Divine intimation was given, that through this ſame Jeſus, the enmity between Jews and Gentiles ſhould be aboliſhed, (Pilate being a Gentile, and Herod a Jew) and the peace, which had been interrupted, reſtored. Hence we ſhall deduce the following truths.

Firſt, Carnal Eccleſiaſtics are the bittereſt enemies of Chriſt and his members.

Pilate and Herod acknowledged the innocence of our bleſſed Saviour; ſo that they made ſome ſcruple of ſentencing him to die. But the chief Prieſts and Scribes ſtood, and vehemently accuſed him, and ſtuck at nothing that might take away his character and life. It is ſtill evident, that none of the perſecutors of the followers

(*m*) Luke xxiii. 12.

and

and diſciples of Chriſt come up to worldly minded Eccleſiaſtics in rancour and cruelty.

Secondly, The great ones of this world are moſt apt to take offence at the abaſement of Chriſt, and the ſimplicity and plainneſs of the Chriſtian religion.

It is obſervable, that our bleſſed Lord nenever was but once at a Court, and then he was bound and mocked, and reviled. Herod was overjoyed when he ſaw Jeſus; but how much better had it been for him, if he had never ſeen him! For by inſulting this ſacred perſon, he filled up the meaſure of his ſins, and drew the Divine vengeance on his own head; he being baniſhed, not long after this, by the Imperial decree *. This conſideration ſhould move us to be more fervent in our prayers to God for all men, and eſpecially for the Kings and Rulers of this world, that the Divine Grace would preſerve them from ſtumbling at this corner Stone which God hath laid in Sion, and from taking offence at the ſimplicity of the Goſpel; and that he would deter them from moleſting the faithful followers of Chriſt. This ſhould alſo abate our eager deſires after high poſts and exalted ſtations, and teach us to reſt contented in lower circumſtances, in which we are leſs liable to take offence at the reproach of Chriſt, and the plainneſs of his ſalutary Doctrines.

* Caius enim Imperator eum, una cum *Herodiade*, perpetuò damnatum exilio, Lugdunum in Gallia relegavit, poſt Chriſtum Servatorem ludibrio habitum anno ſexto; obſervante Jac. Usserio. in *Annal.* V. T. p. 618.

THE

THE PRAYER.

BLeſſed be thy name, O heavenly Father, for giving up thy beloved Son to ſo many kinds of ſufferings, to mockery, inſults, reviling, and contempt for our ſake. Glory be to thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, for thy willingneſs in ſubmitting thyſelf, who art the Eternal Wiſdom, to be the mockery of fools; and for permitting the ſpirit of ridicule and ſlander to foam and rage againſt thy ſacred perſon, that its power might be broken, and that we might not be kept eternally in its bonds. Grant, O Lord, that every one of us may, in the mirror of thine enemies, ſee the image of his own depravity, and own with ſhame and ſorrow, that he has at leaſt in his heart the latent ſeeds of all thoſe corruptions which broke out in them; ſo that we may humble ourſelves before thee, and the more earneſtly ſeek the forgiveneſs of our ſins in the merit of the reproaches and ſufferings of the bonds, inſults, and indignities which thou didſt endure. Bleſs this Conſideration, and grant that it may tend to the edification and ſalvation of our ſouls, for the ſake of thy numberleſs and undeſerved ſufferings. Amen.

CONSIDERATION IX.

The unjuſt method Pilate *took for promoting our bleſſed* LORD'S *releaſe.*

'(a) AND Pilate, when he had called together the chief Prieſts and Rulers, and 'the people, ſaid unto them, Ye have brought 'this man unto me as one that perverteth the 'people: And behold, I having examined 'him before you, have found no fault in this 'man, touching thoſe things whereof ye accuſe 'him; no, nor yet Herod: For I ſent you to 'him, and lo! nothing worthy of death is 'done unto him. I will therefore chaſtiſe him, 'and releaſe him. Now at the feaſt of the 'Paſſover, the Governor was wont to releaſe 'unto the people a priſoner, whom they would. 'Therefore, of neceſſity he muſt releaſe one 'unto them at the feaſt. And there was one 'named Barabbas, a notorious priſoner, who 'lay bound with them that had made inſurrec-'tion with him, who had committed murder 'in the inſurrection.'

Pilate had already begun to deviate from the ſtrait and plain ways of juſtice, and to turn into by-paths, by ſending to Herod the Lord Jeſus, of whoſe innocence he was perfectly convinced, with a view of extricating himſelf out of his

(a) Matth. xxvii. 15, 16. Mark xv. 6, 7. Luke xxiii. 17.

embar-

embarraſsment, and removing this proceſs to another tribunal. But divine Providence having diſappointed this contrivance of his political ſagacity; for Herod ſent Jeſus back to him, arrayed in a gorgeous robe; he thought on a new expedient for clearing himſelf with honour of this troubleſome affair, without either condemning an innocent perſon, or drawing on himſelf the hatred of the Jewiſh nation.

But before he puts his new ſcheme in execution, he again makes a public declaration of our Saviour's innocence, in order to pave the way for the deſign he had formed. To this end, he not only ſummoned the chief Prieſts and Elders who were preſent, as the moſt reſpectable heads of this aſſembly, and the managers of the indictment againſt the innocent Jeſus; but likewiſe made a ſign to all the people, who ſtood in multitudes before his judgment-hall, that they ſhould draw nearer, and, with proper ſilence and attention, hear what he had to propoſe to them. It is very probable, that by thus ſolemnly declaring Chriſt's innocence, Pilate ſuppoſed he ſhould at leaſt work on the populace, ſo that they would inſiſt on the releaſing of this innocent perſon. For it was natural to believe, that among ſuch a multitude that had received many favours from Jeſus, who had healed the ſick, and by doing good to all, deſerved well of them, or their relations.

Thus Pilate ſummons the whole people to get together in a body: Let us alſo draw nearer

to

to his judgment-ſeat, and attentively liſten to this public teſtimony of our Redeemer's innocence. It runs thus: 'Ye have brought this 'man unto me as one that perverteth the people: 'And behold, I having examined him before 'you, have found no fault in this man, touch-'ing thoſe things whereof ye accuſe him; no, 'nor yet Herod: For I ſent you to him, and 'lo! nothing worthy of death is done unto 'him.'

In theſe words of Pilate, we may obſerve three particulars.

Firſt, He ſummarily repeats the contents of the charge, which the chief Prieſts and Elders had preferred againſt Jeſus. 'You have, ſaid the Governor, 'brought this man unto me as 'one that perverteth the people.' Thus the charge of rebellion was the chief point on which all their other accuſations turned, as it was the article into which Pilate, who was a temporal judge and the Emperor's vicegerent, would naturally make a ſtrict enquiry. This part of their charge he publicly repeats, by which he gives them to underſtand, that he well knew their meaning, and was very ſenſible of the greatneſs of the crime, which they alledged againſt Jeſus

Secondly, He in clear and expreſs words certifies, that Chriſt was innocent of the crime laid to his charge: 'I find no fault in this 'man, touching thoſe things whereof ye ac-'cuſe him. As if he had ſaid, You have collected

lected together a formidable heap of complaints, and accuſed this man of many crimes; yet none of theſe things doth he acknowledge, and I myſelf cannot find out the leaſt probability of his being guilty. For, according to all circumſtances, and the beſt information I can get, he never had any ſuch thoughts, and is far from being in a ſituation to execute a ſcheme attended with ſo much difficulty.

Thirdly, He confirms his teſtimony by a double proof, *viz.* by appealing to his own examination of Jeſus, and alſo to Herod's judgment concerning him. In the firſt place, he appeals to his own examination, of which they had been witneſſes: Behold, 'I have examined 'him before you,' *i. e.* I have queſtioned him, enquired into his caſe, compared his confeſſion with your charge, and his anſwer with the depoſitions of your witneſſes, and done every thing which could be expected from an impartial judge. And as by the Roman Laws the plaintiff and defendant are to be confronted (*b*); I have likewiſe acted agreeably to this, and have examined him before you, who were preſent at my enquiry into his caſe. Therefore yourſelves would you but ſpeak the truth, muſt own, that you cannot prove the man guilty of thoſe crimes of which you accuſe him.

In the next place, he appeals to Herod's judgment, adding, 'No, nor yet Herod.' Beſides, Herod has not found the man guilty

(*b*) Acts xxv. 16.

'of

'of any crime: For I ſent you to him, and lo, 'nothing worthy of death is done unto him.' He probably added, You know that there has been a miſunderſtanding between Herod and myſelf, and conſequently he would hardly have acquitted the priſoner in complaiſance to me. Beſides, I did not acquaint him with my opinion of the man's innocence; but left the whole to his own penetration. You yourſelves were alſo preſent there, and doubtleſs were not wanting to ſet off your accuſation in the beſt manner. But he has been found guilty of nothing worthy of death; which I conclude from Herod's ſending him back to me, and by the white robe in which he ordered him to be clothed. By this, I ſuppoſe, his deſign is to ſhew, that he looks upon him as a perſon of a crazed imagination, who ought to be laughed at for his chimeras, but far from having done any thing worthy of death. Now, you cannot but acquieſce in the judgment of Herod, who is of your own religion, and ſovereign of Galilee, where you pretend this man has been moſt buſy in ſowing ſedition. If this were true, Herod, as the ruler of the country, muſt have had the beſt information of it. Such was Pilate's teſtimony of our bleſſed Saviour's innocence, from which, before we proceed any further, we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. As the innocence of Jeſus Chriſt was to be imputed to Jews and Gentiles at the Divine

Tribunal, ſo it was likewiſe to be made manifeſt at the Tribunals of Jews and Gentiles.

The perfect innocence of our bleſſed Saviour was to be the only means for reconciling men to God, and the veil that was to cover their ſins. Now, as the whole human race, until the incarnation of Chriſt, had been divided into Jews and Gentiles with reſpect to religion; the teſtimony of his innocence was to be corroborated by the unanimous conſent of Jews and Gentiles. Pilate was a Gentile, Herod, on the contrary, was a Jew. Both theſe great perſonages, though they differed widely in their religion and politics, though they were at open enmity with each other, yet agreed in this; that Jeſus had done nothing worthy of death. Indeed, the innocence of Chriſt was infinitely beyond what the judges could poſſibly conceive. He was not only innocent of any crimes puniſhable with death, but there was not the leaſt ſhadow of guilt or ſin in him. For, as St. Paul obſerves, 'Such a High Prieſt 'became us, who is holy, harmleſs, unde-'filed, ſeparate from ſinners, and made higher 'than the heavens (*c*).' He was therefore ſo far from meriting death, that he did not deſerve the leaſt mockery or abuſe. It was ſufficient, according to human laws, that Jeſus was acquitted of the charge brought againſt him. But notwithſtanding all this, he was afterwards ſentenced to die. Hence it may be eaſily con-

(*c*) Heb. vii. 26.

jectured,

jectured, that the cauſe of his death did not lie in his own perſon, but in us. Oh, that we may be truly ſenſible, that our tranſgreſſions were the real cauſe of the death of Chriſt! For we, by our ſins, laid the foundation of the ſentence, which God pronounced againſt his Son. How ought this knowledge to humble us, and at the ſame time, to put us in a condition of laying hold on Chriſt's innocence, as our own, and pleading it at the Divine Tribunal.

2. Charity requires that we ſhould clear our neighbour when he is ſlandered, and bear witneſs to his innocence.

A Chriſtian is bound to love his neighbour as himſelf. Now, as we are all ready enough to juſtify our own innocence, when aſperſed by calumnies and malicious reports, it is therefore likewiſe our duty to be concerned for our neighbour's innocence, and, as much as in us lies, to protect it from injuries. In the inſtance before us, Pilate publicly clears our bleſſed Saviour's character before all the people, and by his teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence, contradicts the Rulers of the Jewiſh nation, who charged him with being a malefactor. This public teſtimony of Chriſt's innocence, given by the Roman Governor, is to be conſidered as a prelude of what was afterwards to come to paſs in the Roman Empire. For ſeveral of the Emperors bore witneſs to the innocence of the followers of Chriſt, in public inſtruments, and mandates to the Governors of Provinces, en-

joining them to forbear moleſting the Chriſtians *, and putting them to death. The very perſecutors and executioners † of thoſe harmleſs perſons were often ſenſible of their innocence, and could not forbear giving teſtimony of it.

But this Heathen Governor will riſe in judgment againſt many Chriſtians, who have behaved very differently towards the innocent members of Chriſt, from what he did towards our Saviour with regard to his innocence. Many are convinced of the innocence of the faithful ſervants of Chriſt, when the world aſperſes them with the moſt virulent ſlanders; but will not ſpeak a ſingle word in their defence, from a puſillanimous fear of being ſuſpected to have any connection with them. Others are ſtill more culpable, who are ſo far from taking the part of innocence, that they concur in reviling and loading it with calumnies. There is a third claſs ſtill more abandoned than either of theſe, who, like Herod, make a mock of ſuffering innocence; and others again, who in the gall of bitterneſs, like Pilate, contrary to their own knowledge and conſcience, join in oppreſſing truth and innocence. All theſe offend groſly againſt the ninth Commandment, though ſome ſin with more aggravated guilt than others.

Pilate, having thus publicly borne witneſs to the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, makes uſe of two unwarrantable expedients, in order to

* Vide EUSEBII Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. iv. C. xiii. Lib. viii. C. xiv. Lib. x. Cap. v.

† Vide PLINII epiſtolam ad Trajanum Lib. x. Epiſt. 97.

procure

procure his releaſement. If he had acted agreeably to the conviction of his conſcience, he would have diſcharged this innocent perſon, notwithſtanding the accuſations of the chief Prieſts, and have reſolutely protected him againſt their malice and rage. But a mean, abject fear of man, and worldly policy, led him into crooked ways; ſo that he attempted to gain his point by craft, that he might not make the chief Prieſts his enemies, by an open affront. To this purpoſe he makes two propoſals to them.

The firſt propoſal of Pilate was, to chaſtiſe * Jeſus, and to let him go. The rules of juſtice required, that he ſhould diſcharge the innocent; but to offer to ſcourge him, was the height of injuſtice. If Jeſus was guilty, why ſhould he releaſe him? And if he was innocent, why ſhould he offer to ſcourge him? Thus Pilate was prompted by his carnal wiſdom to have recourſe to a moſt iniquitous method. He was for ſatisfying his troubled conſcience, and therefore ſcrupled to execute the ſentence. But he was, at the ſame time, willing to humour the inveterate hatred of the Jews againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, and to ſupport the reputation of his venerable accuſers: He therefore propoſed to ſcourge him, that it might not be thought that the perſon accuſed was found entirely innocent. This he concluded to be the beſt expedient, on the one ſide for

* παιδευσας ἀ παιδευω coſtigo. *W.*

paying ſome regard to juſtice, and on the other as a ſalvo for the honour of the chief Prieſts and Elders; who now might clear themſelves to the people, by ſaying, that Jeſus of Nazareth had been found in a great meaſure guilty, though Pilate, out of his clemency, *&c.* was pleaſed to ſpare his life. Beſides, he imagined, that the chief Prieſts would the rather be contented with this proceeding: Since by being ſcourged, which was an ignominious puniſhment inflicted only on ſlaves, Jeſus would be rendered contemptible; ſo that he would loſe all his credit with the people, and be deſerted by all his adherents. Had this propoſal of Pilate been accepted, it would have been matter of great triumph to the infernal Powers, as ſome kind of blemiſh would have remained on the oppreſſed innocence of our bleſſed Lord. But God directed this circumſtance contrary to the intention of this heathen Governor. The innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus was deſtined to ſhine forth with unſullied luſtre on this day. It was not only made known, that he had done nothing worthy of death; but a certain perſon was likewiſe to declare, that he had done nothing amiſs; nothing that deſerved the ſlighteſt puniſhment. Thus God brought this affair to quite another iſſue, than what Pilate in his worldly policy had projected.

Pilate's ſecond propoſal was as follows. He put the Lord Jeſus on the ſame footing with a notorious malefactor, and offered the people the

privilege of chooſing which of the two they would have releaſed. Hereby Pilate, who wavered in his mind, like a reed ſhaken by the wind, was for trying whether he could get Jeſus releaſed without any chaſtiſement. This ſcheme was more likly to ſucceed than the former, as it put it in the power of the people to releaſe Jeſus; for many of them had received extraordinary benefits from him, and they were in general more favourably diſpoſed towards him than the chief Prieſts and Elders; who, as Pilate well knew, had delivered him out of envy (*d*). This ſubtil Politician ſaw into this myſtery of iniquity, and concluded that nothing was to be done with the chief Prieſts; ſince it was too much their intereſt to deſtroy Jeſus, who had ſtruck at their dignity and power by his Doctrines. With regard to this incident, we may obſerve,

Firſt, What induced Pilate to make this propoſal. It was occaſioned by the following cuſtom: 'Now at the feaſt of the Paſſover, 'the Governor was wont to releaſe unto the 'people a priſoner, whom they would. There-'fore, of neceſſity he muſt releaſe one unto 'them at the feaſt.'

It is ſomewhat dubious, whether this cuſtom was introduced by the Jews, or by the Romans *. From St. John's account (*e*), who

(*d*) Matth. xxvii. 28.

* Vide Jo. Schmidii et Conr. Hottingeri diſſertationes *de ritu dimittendi reum in feſto Paſchatos*; quarum illa Lipſiæ 1685, hæc Tiguri 1718, prodiit.

(*e*) Chap. xviii. 39.

ſays, 'Ye have a cuſtom that I ſhould releaſe 'one unto you at the Paſſover,' ſome conjecture, that it was a cuſtom of Jewiſh Origin, in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, of which the feaſt of the Paſſover was a commemoration; and that the Romans, after ſubduing Judea, had indulged the Jews in the continuance of this uſage as ſome ſhadow of liberty *. Others are of opinion, that this cuſtom was introduced by the Romans, as a favour ſhewn to the Jews, who reſorted to Jeruſalem from all parts of the world at the feaſt of the Paſſover, that they might celebrate the feaſt with the better temper, and be leſs liable to revolt againſt the Roman Government. Be this as it will, it was a cuſtom contrary to the Law of Nature, which does not allow a convicted malefactor to be releaſed without puniſhment; and likewiſe contrary to the Law of Moſes, which abſolutely excludes from pardon all murderers, or ſhedders of man's blood. However, as the cuſtom had once taken place, the Jews were more tenacious of it than of God's Ordinances; and therefore Pilate, to prevent any diſturbance, was under a neceſſity † of releaſ-

* Judæi ſolebant maleficos in feſtorum ſolennitates reſervare ut ad majorem aliis terrorem incutiendum publicè punirentur Conf. Act. XII. 3, 4. et *Sanhedrin.* C. XI. §. 4. Videtur igitur hic ritus non merè Romanus fuiſſe, ſed potiùs ex occaſione ſimilis moris a Judæis receptus, ut majorem feſto ſuo reverentiam, apud Romanos adſererent; judice celeb. LAMPIO *Comm. in Joh. Tom.* III. p. 556.

† Luc. xxiii. 17. ἀναγκην εἶχεν, quia Judæi privilegiorum ſuorum tenaciſſimi erant.

ing

ing a priſoner to them, whom they would: This was what gave occaſion to the propoſal.

Secondly, The criminal, whom Pilate deſigned to make uſe of to compaſs his end, deſerves our notice; and he is thus deſcribed: 'And there was at that time one named Ba-'rabbas, a notorious priſoner, who lay bound 'with them that had made inſurrection with 'him, who had committed murder in the in-'ſurrection.' This man is deſcribed,

1. By his name. He was called Barabbas, a name at that time common among the Jews, which ſignifies a 'ſon of the father.'

2. He is deſcribed by his crimes, two of which are here ſpecified, namely, ſedition and murder. This was a time when the ſpirit of ſedition prevailed among the Jews*; ſo that the leaſt pretence ſufficed to make them take up arms againſt the RomanGovernment, when they uſed to commit all manner of crimes and outrages. In one of theſe commotions, Barabbas had diſtinguiſhed himſelf by heading a gang of ſeditious perſons, and had even killed a man in the tumult. As the Roman Governor had ſent a party of ſoldiers to diſperſe the revolters, he had probably killed one or two of them in the encounter, ſo that both theſe crimes rendered him utterly unworthy of any favour or interceſſion.

* Cauſas recenſet Jo. LIGHTFOOT, in *Horis Talm.* ad Matth. xxvii. 38.

3. This

3. This criminal is deſcribed by the circumſtances he was in. Barabbas was in priſon, and very probably, when the feaſt was over, was to be executed as an example to others, who were of the ſame turbulent ſpirit. Pilate had alſo at that time other priſoners, (ſince two other malefactors were crucified with Jeſus) but he pitched upon this notorious criminal to be put in competition with the Lord Jeſus; flattering himſelf that the people would never ſue for the diſcharge of ſuch a wretch; for a man-ſlayer, according to their law, was to die without mercy. As to the chief Prieſts and Elders, Pilate did not imagine that they would ſo far debaſe themſelves, and, by interceding for a rebel, render themſelves obnoxious to the court of Rome, by ſeeming to favour popular tumults. But Pilate was greatly miſtaken in this his expectations, as will be ſhewn at large in the following Conſideration. From what has been here ſaid, we ſhall deduce theſe truths.

Firſt, Chriſt, by this circumſtance of his paſſion, was to expiate our ſins of ſeveral kinds. He has,

1. Expiated the culpable improbity of many thouſands, who act contrary to their own conviction, and in their behaviour, do violence to the dictates of their own conſciences. For inſtance, every one is convinced that lying is an infamous ſin, brought into the world by the devil, who is the father of lies; yet for the hopes of a ſmall profit, many do not ſtick at adding

ding lie to lie. Many thouſands are convinced that drunkenneſs excludes men from the kingdom of God (*f*); yet, on every ſlight temptation, are drawn into it. Many thouſands are convinced that evil company is one of Satan's moſt dangerous ſnares; and yet they eaſily ſuffer themſelves to be entangled in it, ſo as to be unable to extricate themſelves.

2. He has expiated the ſins of thoſe who act againſt their conſcience, in order to pleaſe others.

3. He has expiated the ſins of evil cuſtoms, as this of releaſing a malefactor on account of the feaſt. Such cuſtoms, like an impetuous torrent, draw many from their integrity, and hurry them away into ſin.

4. He has expiated the ſins of thoſe who do not behave in their office with probity, and unſhaken firmneſs; but ſometimes from fear, ſometimes from the hope of any worldly advantage, turn aſide from the right way. Now, as all theſe, and the like ſins, had a ſhare in the ſufferings of Chriſt, it behoves us to deteſt and abhor them; and if we are conſcious that we are guilty of all or any of them, we ought ſincerely to repent of ſuch ſins, to amend our lives, and by a lively faith, to make Chriſt our refuge to ſcreen us from the rigour of the Divine Juſtice.

Secondly, Evil cuſtoms, eſpecially thoſe which have a ſpecious appearance, in time

(*f*) Gal. v. 21.

acquire

acquire ſuch veneration, that no man dares to act or ſpeak againſt them. It is ſaid here, that Pilate muſt of neceſſity releaſe a priſoner at the feaſt. As this cuſtom had been once eſtabliſhed, Pilate might have reaſon to apprehend very great diſturbances, had he taken upon him to ſuperſede it, and introduce an innovation. This is generally the caſe in private evil habits. When a man is accuſtomed to any evil, which by long practice is become a habit, it tyranizes over him; ſo that he becomes a miſerable ſlave to it, and is led by it as an ox to the ſlaughter. Whoever therefore finds himſelf entangled with the ſnares of Satan; whoever is conſcious that he ſuffers ſin to gain dominion over him, let him throw himſelf at the feet of his Redeemer. What ſeems impoſſible to corrupt nature is poſſible with God.

Thirdly, It is a very critical and dangerous point to commit the leaſt injuſtice.

This was Pilate's caſe. He thought that it was more ſafe to ſcourge an innocent man, than to crucify him and put him to death. But by his example we may be taught, what a ſlippery path this is; ſince, afterwards, for want of the firmneſs becoming his office, he was carried to commit a greater, which he was for preventing by doing a ſmaller, act of injuſtice. For at length 'he releaſed Barabbas unto them; 'and when he had ſcourged Jeſus, he de-

'livered

'livered him to be crucified (*g*).' To think it adviſable to commit a ſmall ſin, in order to prevent a greater, is a falſe way of reaſoning. If a perſon finds himſelf unable to prevent the commiſſion of two ſins at once, he muſt indeed chiefly exert himſelf to avoid the greater ſin: but he is not to give his conſent to, or by any means to promote, the ſmaller. If we are by faith united to Jeſus Chriſt, and ſtrengthened by his Spirit, we ſhall chooſe to lay down our lives, rather than offend our Saviour by the deliberate commiſſion of any preſumptuous ſin. The Lord give us this reſolution, and ſo eſtabliſh and ſtrengthen it in us, that the gates of hell may never be able to prevail againſt us.

THE PRAYER.

AND now, O faithful and ever-living Saviour, praiſed be thy name for condeſcending to permit that, through the tyranny of evil cuſtoms, thy ſacred perſon ſhould be rejected by the whole Jewiſh nation, and an infamous murderer be preferred before thee. May we with grateful hearts acknowledge the benefits derived to us from it; and may we be conſtrained by this inſtance of thy love, willingly to renounce all the evil cuſtoms of the world, and all thoſe ſins which brought thee down into ſuch an abyſs of humiliation

(*g*) Matth. xxvii. 26.

and

and ſufferings. Grant this for the ſake of thoſe meritorious ſufferings which thou didſt endure for us. Amen.

CONSIDERATION X.

The murderer Barabbas *put in competition with the* LORD JESUS.

'(*a*) AND when they were gathered together, Pilate ſaith unto them, Ye 'have a cuſtom, that I ſhould releaſe one unto 'you at the Paſſover. Then the multitude, cry-'ing aloud, began to deſire him to do as he 'had ever done unto them. But Pilate anſwered 'them, ſaying, Whom will ye that I releaſe 'unto you? Barabbas, or Jeſus who is called 'Chriſt? Will ye that I releaſe unto you the 'King of the Jews? For he knew that the 'chief Prieſt had delivered him for envy. 'And when he was ſet down on the judg-'ment-ſeat, his wife ſent unto him, ſaying, 'Have thou nothing to do with that juſt man; 'for I have ſuffered many things this day in 'a dream, becauſe of him. But the chief 'Prieſts and Elders perſuaded and moved the 'multitude, that they ſhould aſk Barabbas and 'deſtroy Jeſus. They then cried out all at 'once, ſaying, Away with this man, and re-

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 17——21. Mark xv. 8——11. Luke xxiii. 18, 19. John xviii. 39, 40.

'leaſe

'leaſe unto us Barabbas! Now Barabbas was 'a robber.'

In the laſt Conſideration we have obſerved, how Pilate had recourſe to various by-ways, and unjuſt expedients, for promoting the releaſment of the innocent Jeſus; how he propoſed ſcourging him; how he put it to the people's choice, whether they would have Jeſus releaſed, or Barabbas a notorious rebel and murderer, being in hopes that the multitude would prefer our bleſſed Saviour to ſuch an odious criminal. But this affair turned out contrary to Pilate's expectations, as appears from that part of the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion which is cited above; where we are informed that the murderer Barabbas was publicly ſet in competition with the bleſſed Jeſus. In this account we ſhall conſider

Firſt, What preceded this incident,

Secondly, Pilate's management of the affair,

Thirdly, the intimation God gave Pilate on this occaſion,

Fourthly, The effect of this propoſal made by Pilate to the people.

I.

As to what preceded this incident we ſhall obſerve,

1. What happened on Pilate's ſide.

2. What

2. What happened with regard to the people.

1. On Pilate's ſide it was preceded by a propoſal. For the Jews being gathered together, Pilate ſaid unto them, 'Ye have a cuſtom 'that I ſhould releaſe one unto you at the 'Paſſover.' The people, who were come to Jeruſalem from all parts on the account of the Paſſover, had, ſome out of hatred againſt Chriſt, and ſome out of curioſity to ſee the iſſue of the affair, aſſembled in great numbers in the court before Pilate's hall of judgment. Pilate laid hold of this opportunity, and put the Jews in mind of the cuſtom which, according to St. John's account, had hitherto been obſerved: You have, ſays he, a cuſtom that I ſhould releaſe one to you at the Paſſover. As to the nature of this cuſtom and its origin, I have juſt touched upon it in the preceding Conſideration. Pilate was no ſtranger to the zealous adherence of the Jews, to the ordinances and cuſtoms traſmitted down to them from their anceſtors, and well knew that they would rather ſuffer death, than be deprived of their ancient privileges. Therefore, he thought of throwing a bait among the people, who looked upon this cuſtom as an eſſential part of their liberty, and by that means gaining their hearts; ſo that they might make uſe of that favourable opportunity, and releaſe Jeſus.

2. Hereupon followed what St. Mark relates of the people, in theſe words, according to ſome

ſome copies: 'And the multitude went up' *i. e.* they drew nearer to Pilate's houſe, in order to have a diſtinct view of the two perſons exhibited together. In other copies of the Greek text * the words are, 'The multitude 'cried aloud †, and began to deſire him to do 'as he had ever done unto them.' The minds of the people ſeem to have been ſo taken up with the proceedings againſt Jeſus of Nazareth, that they never thought of this their cuſtomary privilege; nor had they claimed it of the Roman Governor. But when they were put in mind of it by Pilate himſelf, their deſire that this ancient cuſtom ſhould be obſerved, revived and grew to ſuch a head, that it broke out into tumultuous outcries, demanding that Pilate would immediately proceed to buſineſs; ſo that their cuſtoms and privileges might not ſuffer any prejudice. From theſe circumſtances we ſhall deduce the following doctrines.

1. Our deliverance from the tyranny of evil cuſtoms coſt our bleſſed Lord very dear.

St. Peter obſerves, that Chriſt hath redeemed us from our vain converſation, received by tradition, [*i. e.* directed and governed by ancient maxims and cuſtoms] not with ſilver and

* *Nimirum Cod. Cantabr. Bezæ, & Codex Vaticanus unus, legunt* ἀναβας, *vel* ἀναβήσας, *quos ſeqnuntur verſiones* Vulg. Copt. Goth. & Lutheri. *Plurimi verò codices legunt* ἀναβοησας, *quæ lectio meritò præfertur, coll. verſ.* 13, 14. Æthiops *utramque exprimit lectionem:* & adſcenderunt populus, & clamaverunt.

† It is thus rendered in our tranſlation, according to the printed Greek text, and moſt of the manuſcript copies. *W.*

gold, but with his precious blood (*b*). Therefore he now ſtood before Pilate, becauſe he was to feel the tyrannical power of ancient cuſtoms, and how the god of this world holds weak men ſo faſtly bound with theſe fetters. Now in order to deprive theſe evil worldly maxims and cuſtoms of their power and dominion, and to procure for us abſolute deliverance from them, the innocent and ſpotleſs Lamb of God ſuffered the tyrannical violence of ſuch cuſtoms to rage againſt his perſon; and at laſt permitted that, through the obſervance of ſuch an ancient privilege, he ſhould be rejected and ſentenced to death. Since therefore, the Son of God, for our deliverance from worldly cuſtoms, thus ſhed his precious blood, far be it from us, by our levity and irreſolution, to forfeit again that privilege which he ſo dearly purchaſed, by giving ourſelves up as ſlaves to ſinful cuſtoms and ill habits. Some ſins, indeed, by long cuſtom are grown into a faſhion, to which few are ſo ſcrupulous as not to conform; yet far be it from us, that we ſhould ſuffer ourſelves to be carried away by that overflowing ſtream. And though our ſingularity ſhould expoſe us to the laughter of the world, let us not heſitate to ſuffer ourſelves to be ridiculed with the Son of God, rather than tread under foot that precious ranſom, by which he has redeemed us from the cuſtoms of our fathers.

(*b*) 1 Peter i. 18.

2. Men

2. Men uſually ſhew moſt zeal for, and attachment to thoſe things which concern their carnal liberty.

This cuſtom of the Jews had ſome ſhadow of liberty; and the people were extremely fond of a privilege, by which they had a right annually to claim the releaſment of a malefactor at the Paſſover. Therefore, on the firſt intimation from Pilate, that they might now make uſe of this privilege, their deſire of it declared itſelf with great vehemence, and broke out into tumultuous clamours. This is always the caſe when men take it into their heads, that the unwarrantable liberty, or rather licentiouſneſs, which they have aſſumed contrary to the Word of God, is likely to be reſtrained by wholeſome laws. Nothing can equal their violence to oppoſe all ſuch neceſſary reſtrictions. Oh, that men would ſhew ſuch a zealous attachment for true liberty! ſuch an inflamed deſire of being releaſed from the bonds of Satan! Oh, that this deſire would prompt them to proſtrate themſelves before God, to lift up their voice, and with tears implore him, that he would deliver them from the thraldom of their ſins and pernicious luſts, and 'make them free by the Son, that they may 'be free indeed (*c*).'

(*c*) John viii. 36.

II.

We come, in the next place, to conſider how Pilate conducted this affair. The people having claimed the obſervance of this old cuſtom, he immediately ſent for Barabbas from the priſon, where he had hitherto been kept, and ordered him to be exhibited to public view, placing him near Jeſus. Then Pilate put this queſtion to the people, 'Whom will 'ye that I releaſe unto you? Barabbas, or Je-'ſus who is called Chriſt? Will ye that I re-'leaſe unto you the King of the Jews?' Never were two perſons of characters ſo different placed on the ſame footing; one being the eternal Son of God, who was a pattern of the moſt perfect innocence and holineſs, and the other a notorious robber, murderer, and rebel.

At firſt ſight, this ſcheme of Pilate ſeems very well concerted. For

Firſt, He confines the choice to two perſons, namely, Jeſus whom he knew to be innocent, and who, by healing the ſick, raiſing the dead, *&c.* had endeared himſelf to the people; and an infamous malefactor who had committed murder, ſhed innocent blood, and had been taken in the very act of rebellion.

Secondly, By this contrivance he got the whole affair out of the hands of the chief Prieſts,

Prieſts, who had delivered Jeſus for envy, into thoſe of the people, among whom he knew that our bleſſed Lord had not a few diſciples and adherents.

Thirdly, In his addreſs to the people he gave our Saviour ſuch names or titles, as might moſt effectually recommend him to their favour. His words are, 'JESUS' of whom it is ſaid he is, 'or who is called, CHRIST,' *i. e.* the Meſſiah whom ye have ſo long expected. He likewiſe entitles him 'the King of the Jews.' By this, he puts them in mind how the Jewiſh people, but few days before, when Jeſus entered Jeruſalem, by their ſhouts and acclamations had, as it were, proclaimed him King of Iſrael; ſo that they ought to conſider, what a diſgrace it would be to the Jews to ſuffer their King to be thus undeſervedly crucified.

Fourthly, By putting a rebel in competition with Chriſt, Pilate was in hopes that the chief Prieſts, out of caution and prudence, would not interfere in the matter. For they themſelves had accuſed Jeſus of rebellion; and ſtrongly inſiſted on his being put to death, becauſe he perverted the people, and diſſuaded them from paying the tribute due to the Emperor. Now as they had not been able to produce one legal proof of any ſeditious action againſt Jeſus; whereas, Barabbas, on the contrary, had been taken in the very fact, heading a party of men in a tumult; Pilate thought the chief Prieſts and Elders would never declare

for a rebel, nor adviſe the people to procure his releaſe; ſince it would render them ſuſpected by the Romans of favouring ſedition, which was a capital crime, and ſeldom or never pardoned by the Governor. Thus he thought he had diſpoſed every thing in the beſt manner by his political ſagacity, and, in his heart, congratulated himſelf on the ſucceſs of his contrivance.

But in all theſe human ſchemes there was a great mixture of injuſtice. For

1. Pilate expoſes to the chance of being crucified a perſon of whoſe innocence he was convinced; and delivers Jeſus up, and with him juſtice itſelf, to the caprice of the populace. Thus he departed from the plain direct path of juſtice, as laid down by the laws, and turned aſide into a very ſlippery way, which was full of ſtumbling blocks. 'He 'knew that the High Prieſts had delivered him 'for envy.' Should not this have induced him to conſider the great influence, which the rank and authority of the chief Prieſts and Elders gave them over the people? Ought he not, as a wiſe ſtateſman, to have reflected on the lengths, which envy is known to run on its reſtleſneſs and rancour, and what infamous actions it cauſes men to perpetrate?

2. Pilate by this action obſcures the innocence of Chriſt, after having borne a public teſtimony of it, in the diſplaying of which Divine Providence, at this time more eſpecially,

was

was concerned. For had this artifice of Pilate ſucceeded, and the people demanded that Jeſus might be releaſed, it might have been ſaid by the chief Prieſts, *&c.* that popular clamours had prevailed, and that it was not becauſe of his innocence that Jeſus had been releaſed, but becauſe he was favoured by the people; who had before oppoſed his being carried to priſon, and conſequently obſtructed the courſe of juſtice. Thus Pilate, in this affair, ſeems to have been an engine of Satan, who, above all things, wanted to fix a blemiſh on the innocence of his Conqueror.

3. By this unjuſt expedient, he precludes himſelf from all opportunity of urging any thing further in behalf of our Saviour's innocence, with proper vigour and efficacy. For after the Jews had once deſired Barabbas to be releaſed to them, Jeſus ſtood actually condemned, and rejected by the majority of the people.

4. He acted contrary to the true intereſt of the common-wealth; for by the hopes of eſcaping puniſhment he, as it were, encouraged perſons of turbulent and ſeditious ſpirits, with which Judea then ſwarmed, to the commiſſion of all kind of violence and outrages. This was manifeſtly running counter to the duty of his office; he being appointed by the Roman Emperor to keep a watchful eye and a ſtrict hand over all tumultuous proceedings. Hence we learn

First, That he who conſults other men in dubious caſes, without any regard to God's Will, which is the ſupreme rule for our behaviour and conduct, will be overcome by the firſt temptation that aſſaults him.

Pilate aſks the people, 'Will ye that I releaſe unto you Barabbas, or Jeſus?' whereas he ought to have acted according to the Roman laws, or the dictates of his own conſcience, for both of them informed him that the innocent ought to be releaſed. There are ſtill too many nominal Chriſtians, who are ſuch ſlaves to men; many who, from a ſervile deſire of pleaſing others, ſtick at no kind of injuſtice in private life; many judges who accommodate themſelves more to the corrupt taſte of others than to the unalterable rule of rectitude. That theſe ſins might be forgiven to thoſe who are heartily ſorry for them, the Supreme Judge and Prophet has ſuffered, and been ſentenced to death, through his judge's pliableneſs to the will of others.

Secondly, Chriſt by theſe circumſtances of his paſſion has expiated many ſins committed by men, on condition of faith and repentance.

1. He has expiated our arrogant deſires, when, ſeduced by ſelf-love, we are for appearing better, more wiſe, more learned, or more pious, than we in reality are. We are fond of comparing ourſelves with thoſe that are worſe than we are. In order therefore to atone for this

this haughty deſire of our heart, Chriſt ſuffered himſelf to be ſhewn in public and ranked with the moſt abandoned malefactor.

2. Our bleſſed Saviour has expiated our deſire of reconciling light and darkneſs, Chriſt and Belial, God and the world, holineſs and ſin. The contrariety between theſe is no leſs than that of Chriſt and Barabbas.

3. He has expiated all indirect ways of wreſting juſtice, all contrivances of carnal wiſdom and worldly policy, which generally give an ill appearance to a good cauſe.

4. He has expiated that depravity which, from a deſire of ingratiating oneſelf with men, and gaining their favour, gives up the cauſe of Chriſt and his members to the option of a licentious populace, from whom no juſtice is to be expected.

5. He has expiated that depravity by which men ſo frequently act contrary to conviction, and rather conform to the opinions of other people, than the dictates of their own conſcience. As theſe ſins contributed to aggravate the ſufferings of the innocent Jeſus, it ſhould inſpire us with an utter deteſtation, and ſincere repentance, of them.

III.

We are further to obſerve the Intimation which God gave Pilate on this occaſion. The account of this remarkable incident is mentioned only

only by St. Matthew, who relates it thus: 'When he was ſet down on the judgment-ſeat, 'his wife ſent unto him, ſaying, Have thou 'nothing to do with that juſt man; for I have 'ſuffered many things this day in a dream, 'becauſe of him.' Thus God gave Pilate an admonition, and made his own wife the inſtrument to convey it, who in this affair was free from all prejudice or partiality; for ſhe was not of the Jewiſh religion, nor did ſhe know whether Jeſus was guilty or innocent. But, as her huſband had been diſturbed in his reſt by the early application of the High Prieſt and Elders, ſhe continued in bed for ſome time after; and falling aſleep again, ſhe had a very uneaſy dream, in which ſhe probably ſaw, as in a viſion, the whole trial of Jeſus before her huſband; how a man perfectly innocent was brought before Pilate, and he ſolicited to give orders for the execution of the ſentence of death paſſed on him; and poſſibly ſhe had ſome preſage of the misfortunes that ſhould fall on him and his whole family, ſhould he ſo far give way to the clamours of the people as to commit ſuch an act of injuſtice. In this dream ſhe had ſuffered much, and was extremely diſordered by the impreſſion it had made on her mind. When ſhe awaked out of her ſleep, ſhe heard an uncommon noiſe, and when ſhe ſaw through the window what a crowd was gathered before the houſe, ſhe was ſeized with a dreadful apprehenſion that her dream would

would prove too true. Upon this, ſhe inſtantly diſpatched a perſon to her huſband, who was ſitting on the judgment-ſeat, to conjure him not to have any hand in the trial; adding, that the priſoner was an innocent juſt man, and that if he ſhould be prevailed on to conſent to his execution, he would be guilty of a moſt heinous crime.

This dream has been viewed in various lights by the Learned. Some look on it as a work of Satan, who impoſed on Pilate's wife, in order to prevent our Saviour's death, and conſequently the redemption of Mankind *. If this had been the caſe, Satan would have acted inconſiſtently with himſelf, by endeavouring, at one and the ſame time, to hinder the condemnation of Chriſt, and to inſtigate the chief Prieſts, the Elders, and all the people, with tumultuous clamours to inſiſt on the execution of the ſentence. From all the circumſtances of this tranſaction, it may reaſonably be concluded, that the Evil Spirit was perplexed within himſelf, to find out what Jeſus of Nazareth could be; and that he was not quite certain that he was the Seed of the Woman which was to bruiſe his head, thinking Chriſt's appearance much too mean and deſpicable for any ſuch attempt. It is therefore probable, that Satan had no concern in this dream; but that

* Ita IGNATIUS, in *Epiſt. ad Philipp. C.* IV item BERNHARDUS, BEDA, LYRA, et alii.

it

it was rather a viſion ſent from God † or ſome good Spirit, in order to admoniſh Pilate, who was now on the point of committing the moſt flagitious act of injuſtice, and at the ſame time to caſt a luſtre on our bleſſed Saviour's innocence; for it was then extremely wronged and obſcured, by Pilate's injurious expedient of placing him in competition with a murderer, but was ſet in a very glorious light by Divine Providence, by means of this viſion. Hence we may deduce the following truths.

1. Dreams of admonition are neither to be totally rejected, nor abſolutely credited, ſo as to occaſion any terror or miſtruſtful fears in the mind.

There are properly three kinds of dreams. Some may be called natural, which ariſe from the images that have occupied the mind in the courſe of the day, and conſequently are the effect of a wakeful and buſy imagination. There are likewiſe dreams infuſed by Satan, inciting, even in ſleep, evil deſires, by the repreſentation of ſinful objects. Laſtly, there are Divine dreams, when God, by the means of a good Spirit, makes ſomething known to a man in his ſleep, as a pre-admonition, either of ſome misfortune, or of ſomething that may tend to the good of himſelf or others. But, ſince it is not always very eaſy to diſtinguiſh between theſe different kinds of dreams, particu-

† Pluribus id probat. CORN ADAM. in *Obſerv. Exeg.* p. 189. Adde VALENTIN. FRIDERICI. FRID. GOTTL.

larly

larly the natural and divine, it behoves us not to be too haſty and credulous, ſo as to be driven to and fro by every airy repreſentation of fancy; nor abſolutely to reject ſuch admonitions, ſince they may be the vehicle of ſome ſecret intimation from Divine Providence. This conſideration, at leaſt, ſhould make us careful and circumſpect, and in order to find, and walk in, this middle way, proper aſſiſtance and wiſdom muſt be implored from above in all dubious caſes.

2. The admonitions which God permits to happen to a man, in order to reſtrain him from the perpetration of ſin, will be imputed to him, if diſregarded, to his greater condemnation. This intimation of Divine Providence, with which Pilate was made acquainted on his judgment-ſeat, is not only related by the Evangeliſt, but is likewiſe ſet down in God's book of remembrance, and when the ſins of Pilate ſhall be laid open with all their aggravating circumſtances at the great Day of account, it will enhance his guilt. Let every one therefore reverently admire the Providence of God, regard its kind admonitions, and with filial obedience be thereby reſtrained from ſin.

IV.

Laſtly, We are to conſider the effect which this propoſal made by Pilate had both on the chief Prieſts and on the people.

Firſt,

Firſt, As for the chief Prieſts and Elders, they urged the people to require, that Barabbas ſhould be releaſed, and that Jeſus might be put to death. Probably, the meſſenger ſent by Pilate's wife had deſired him to withdraw from the judgment-hall, and upon this Pilate went to ſee what his wife had farther to ſay. The chief Prieſts and Elders made uſe of this interval to mingle with the people, and by all kinds of perſuaſions to gain their ſuffrages. Or, perhaps, the meſſage from Pilate's wife was delivered to him in an audible voice, as he ſat on the ſeat of judgment; ſo that he was very much affected with it, and the people deſired, at the ſame time, a few minutes to conſult about the choice. This opportunity the Doctors and Rulers of the people laid hold of, to infuſe into the minds of the ignorant multitude a determined rage againſt the perſon of Jeſus, and, like abandoned incendiaries, to kindle in them the flames of envy and hatred. Upon this occaſion, they may be ſuppoſed to have left no ſtone unturned to compaſs their inhuman drift: They threatened to cut off from the ſynagogue all who ſhould vote for Jeſus, and promiſed their favour to thoſe who ſhould declare for Barabbas. As for thoſe who had a tender conſcience, and ſcrupled to vote for the releaſe of a murderer; they made them eaſy by aſſuring them, that they would be anſwerable for it, and that thus they might ſafely vote in favour of this murderer. They added, that if Barabbas had committed

mitted a falſe ſtep, it was through a zeal for God's honour, and that he was a ſtickler for the pure Doctrine of the Jewiſh Church; that Jeſus of Nazareth, on the contrary, was a known heretic, who ſeduced others by the ſpeciouſneſs of his falſe Doctrines, and had murdered more ſouls than Barabbas had bodies; that it was not fit ſuch a wretch ſhould be tolerated any longer among God's people; and that a more acceptable ſervice could not be done to the God of Iſrael, than to join in delivering him up to the moſt ſhameful death, in order to be cut off from the Jewiſh Church as an accurſed member. For ſuch remonſtrances to irritate the minds of the people, the chief Prieſts were not at a loſs.

Secondly, On the common people, who were otherwiſe better affected to Chriſt than the chief Prieſts and Scribes, theſe miſrepreſentations produced this dreadful effect, that the whole multitude cried aloud, 'Away with this man, and re-'leaſe unto us Barabbas (*d*).' Thus Satan, by a wonderful artifice, in a few moments made ſuch a vaſt multitude unanimouſly cry out, 'Away 'with him! O what a diſmal ſpectacle was this, that the Prince of Life ſhould be rejected, and a murderer releaſed! How wonderful was the wiſe appointment of God, that the Son of his Love ſhould be the object of univerſal hatred, that he might regain for us the love of God, which we had unhappily forfeited! We ſhall

(*d*) Luke xxiii. 18.

con-

conclude this Conſideration with the following obſervations.

1. During the perſecutions of Chriſt and his members, the thoughts and inclinations of many hearts are laid open.

By this public competition between Chriſt and Barabbas, were diſcovered the latent corruptions of the human heart. Pilate, the chief Prieſts, and the people, betrayed the abominable corruptions which lay at the bottom of their hearts. Here it was evidently ſeen who were the greateſt movers of ſedition. The chief Prieſts had before accuſed Jeſus, alledging that he ſtirred up the people *; but here it is ſaid, the chief Prieſts moved † the people. Their miſrepreſentations were the boiſterous winds that ſtirred the troubled ſea of popular rage. This is ſtill the way of thoſe who ſeduce the people. They always cry out againſt any appearance of ſedition, when they have no intereſt in it themſelves: But they are the firſt to raiſe diſturbances, when they can compaſs any ſiniſter end, or oppreſs godlineſs and innocence, by popular tumults. By the inſtance before us, we may likewiſe ſee what an unſteady reed the people is, and how eaſily ſhaken; how little their acclamations and applauſes are to be relied on; how uncertain their approbation how precarious their favour, how variable their in-

* ἀνασειει τον λαον. Luke xxiii. 5.

† ἀνεσεισαν τον λαον, Mark xv. 11. The ſame word is uſed in both paſſages in the original, *W.*

clinations,

clinations, how ſhort-lived their gratitude. Here we may learn to know what the world in general is, ſince it could prefer a flagitious murderer to the Prince of Life.

2. As good Miniſters make it their buſineſs to lead men to Chriſt, ſo unfaithful teachers ſeduce men from him.

Of this the Doctors of the Jewiſh nation gave a manifeſt proof, by poiſoning the minds of the people with many prejudices, with hatred and rancour againſt the innocent Jeſus; ſo that at length they induced them publicly to reject the Lord of Glory, and to demand the releaſe of a murderer in preference to him. It muſt have touched theſe unfaithful ſhepherds to the quick, that Jeſus ſhould call them thieves, robbers, and murderers (*e*): But here they made good the words of our bleſſed Lord, and betrayed the inveterate malice and wickedneſs, which they ſecretly harboured in their breaſts. For, by the great pains they took in gaining over the multitude to favour Barabbas, did not they ſhew themſelves patrons and companions of robbers and murderers? This is too often the caſe in our days. Many falſe teachers have a greater regard to their own temporal advantage, than for the honour of Chriſt, and his Goſpel. It therefore behoves every one who is deſtined for the Miniſtry inceſſantly to pray to God, that he would plant in his heart ſuch a tender regard for Chriſt, ſuch a holy zeal for his ho-

(*e*) John x. 8——10.

nour and glory, that he may be ready, with joy, to ſacrifice his own honour and intereſt, if he can by that means bring ſouls to Chriſt. The ſaying of John the Baptiſt ſhould be the motto of ſuch a conſcientious Miniſter of the Goſpel, 'He muſt increaſe, but I muſt de-'creaſe (*f*).'

3. It is a heinous ſin for a man of great authority, and influence over the people, to impoſe upon their ignorance, and to make them the inſtruments for executing a wicked deſign.

In the inſtance before us, the chief Prieſts incurred the guilt of this heinous ſin. And the Antichriſtian perſecutors of the Church of Rome tread in their footſteps, and like them keep the people in the groſſeſt ignorance, that they may turn and wind them any way as their intereſt may require. How unhappy is the people of whom it may be ſaid, 'They who lead thee 'cauſe thee to err (*g*)!' But woe to thoſe deſigning hypocrites, who take advantage of the ignorance and ſimplicity of the people, to cauſe them to err! 'Curſed is he that maketh the 'blind to go out of the way: And all the peo-'ple ſhall ſay, Amen (*h*).'

4. Jeſus Chriſt is ſtill daily rejected among Chriſtians.

Though our ears no longer hear thoſe dreadful words, Away with Jeſus, yet many thouſands prefer Barabbas to him; for as often as

(*f*) John iii. 30. (*g*) Iſaiah iii. 12.
(*h*) Deut. xxvii. 18.

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we prefer our ſinful luſts to the commands of our Saviour, and fulfil the former, while we poſtpone the latter, we hold with Barabbas, and reject the bleſſed Jeſus. The cry of all the proud and ambitious is, Away with this Jeſus, who would have us ſacrifice our honour to his! The cry of the voluptuous is, Away with Jeſus, who would have us renounce the pleaſures of this world, take up our croſs, and mortify the fleſh! The cry of the whole multitude of the covetous is, Away with this Jeſus, who would have us renounce our Mammon, and give part of the money which we have earned with ſo much pains, in alms to the poor! We ſhall follow no ſuch leader. This is the cry of all the children of Antichriſt. On every allurement to ſin, Chriſt and Satan, as it were, ſtand in competition; the former admoniſhes, the latter intices; Chriſt enjoins, Satan forbids. If we give way to the temptation, we ſide with Satan, who was a rebel and murderer from the beginning, and, reject the bleſſed Jeſus. Alas! this wickedneſs is daily acted. Every one, who will not ſubmit to the eaſy yoke of Chriſt, and obey his precepts, rejects him, and makes choice of Barabbas. Every one who delights in and countenances vice, and on the contrary, ſuppreſſes true religion and virtue; every one who perſecutes the godly, and connives at the impiety of the wicked, eſpecially when they are peſons of rank, or protected by men in power, rejects Jeſus, and prefers Barabbas. If we are guilty

of this dreadful ſin, the conſequence of it will be, that we ſhall be rejected by Chriſt in our turn, when he cometh in the glory of his Father at the laſt day.

5. The diſciples of Chriſt are not to expect better treatment from the world, than what their Lord and Maſter met with. As the whole multitude cried out, Away with him, give us Barabbas; ſo likewiſe they cried out againſt St. Paul, Away with him (*i*)! and the ſame outcry was repeated numberleſs times afterwards againſt the primitive Chriſtians; Away, ſaid their perſecutors, with theſe Atheiſts *! And this was, becauſe they would not acknowledge the idols of the Heathens to be gods †. How often is the name of the Saints traduced as evil? But Chriſt ſays, 'Bleſſed are ye 'when men ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt 'you falſely for my ſake (*k*)!' We are not therefore to take offence when this happens to other faithful ſervants of God; nor are we to think it ſtrange, when we ſee every thing dark and tempeſtuous about us, and when the world cries out, that we are not worthy to live. Happy are we when this comes upon us for Chriſt's ſake! for it is infinitely better to be rejected by

(*i*) Acts xxi. 36.

* Αιρε τους αθεους. Vide Epiſtolam eccleſiæ Smyrnenſis de martyrio Polycarpi C. IX. in ITTIGII *Bibliotheca patrum Apoſtol.* P. 394.

† Vide CHRISTIANI ROTHOLTI *Paganum Obtrectatorem*, lib. II. c. X. p. 405.

(*k*) Luke vi. 22.

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the world in fellowſhip with Chriſt than to enjoy the eſteem, love, and applauſe of the world for a ſeaſon, and afterwards to hear theſe dreadful words proceed from the mouth of our Redeemer and Judge, 'Depart from me, ye that 'work iniquity (*l*).'

THE PRAYER.

WE alſo thank thee, O gracious Saviour, for this part of thy ſufferings which we have now conſidered. Grant that our hearts may be mollified and changed by ſuch conſiderations; may be filled with hatred againſt ſin, and excited to a cordial love of thee. Preſerve us from impiouſly rejecting thee, and from preferring the ſervice of Satan to the fellowſhip of thy ſufferings, Give us we beſeech thee, henceforth by thy Spirit, the will and ability conſtantly to reject the evil and chooſe the good, to bear thy reproach, to take upon us thy croſs, and willingly to ſubmit to be rejected with thee by the world, that we may be acknowledged by thee before the Father and his holy Angels. Grant this for the ſake of thy meritorious ſufferings. Amen.

(*l*) Matth. vii. 23.

CONSIDERATION XI.

Pilate's *fruitleſs endeavours to releaſe the* LORD JESUS.

'(a) PILATE therefore, willing to releaſe 'Jeſus, ſaith again unto them, What 'will ye then that I ſhall do with Jeſus, 'who is called Chriſt, and whom ye call the 'King of the Jews. And they all cried out, 'Crucify him! Crucify him! And he ſaid 'unto them the third time, Why, what evil 'hath he done? I have found no cauſe of 'death in him: I will therefore chaſtiſe him, 'and let him go. But they cried out the more 'exceedingly, Let him be crucified! And 'they were inſtant with loud voices, requiring 'that he might be crucified: And the voices 'of them and of the chief Prieſts prevailed. 'And ſo Pilate, willing to content the people, 'gave ſentence that it ſhould be as they re-'quired. And he releaſed unto them him that 'for ſedition and murder had been caſt into 'priſon, whom they had deſired; but he de-'livered Jeſus unto their will.'

In the laſt Conſideration, we have obſerved that the Lord Jeſus was placed on the ſame footing with Barabbas, a rebel and murderer,

(a) Matth. xxvii. 22, 23. Mark xv. 12—15. Luke xxiii. 20—25.

and

and offered to the choice of the people; who, by the inſtigation of the chief Prieſts, rejected Jeſus, and demanded with a tumultuous clamour, that the murderer ſhould be releaſed. In theſe words we have a further account of Pilate's fruitleſs endeavours to releaſe the Lord Jeſus. Herein is mentioned,

Firſt, Pilate's intention.

Secondly, His fruitleſs endeavours for putting his deſign in execution.

I.

Pilate's intention is intimated by St. Luke (*m*) in theſe words: 'Pilate therefore, willing to 'releaſe Jeſus. It would have been more agreeable to Pilate, if the people by their own choice had declared for Jeſus; for he was not only in his own mind convinced of our Saviour's innocence, but likewiſe had been warned by his wife to have nothing to do with that juſt Man, nor offer the leaſt injury to his perſon. But when, contrary to his expectation and all probability, the repeated cry of the whole multitude was, 'Away with this man, and 'releaſe unto us Barabbas', he ſtill, for a time, adhered to his firſt purpoſe of endeavouring to procure Jeſus's diſcharge.

If he had been truly in earneſt in his deſign, he would have proceeded according to the Laws, and made uſe of his juridical power; and by

(*m*) Chap. xxiii. 22.

that means, according to all human appearance, would ſoon have accompliſhed his deſire. For he afterwards boaſts of his authority, when he ſays to Jeſus, 'Knoweſt thou not 'that I have power to crucify thee, and have 'power to releaſe thee (*c*).' But Pilate was wavering and irreſolute. He was unwilling to condemn an innocent perſon; but, at the ſame time, he was for keeping in with the accuſers of this innocent Man, that he might not draw their reſentment on himſelf. Thus his mind fluctuated, without immediately determining any thing; ſo that he himſelf, as it were, ſtood in the way, and obſtructed the execution of his own purpoſe. For he transferred the juridical power, which he had to acquit Jeſus, into the hands of the people; and ſo far betrayed the cauſe of innocence and juſtice, as to leave it to the option of the tumultuous populace, whether they would have the innocent Jeſus releaſed, or Barabbas, who was a rebel and murderer. Thus Pilate himſelf in a manner tied his own hands, and curtailed his power of adminiſtering juſtice.

Pilate, in this behaviour, is a true repreſentative of thoſe men, who have abundance of good intentions; but their wills are ſo enſnared by the allurements of ſin, that they never can reſolve to put them in execution. They deſign to leave off this and the other vice; they promiſe that for the future they will abſtain

(*c*) John xix. 10.

from

from thoſe mean vices of curſing, ſwearing, and lying; they will no longer talk obſcenely; they will abſtain from intemperate drinking; they will avoid bad company, and endeavour to amend in every reſpect. But alas! theſe good reſolutions are never put in practice. For they will not make uſe of the proper means to effect their deſigns. They will not avoid the occaſions of ſinning; they will not engage in earneſt ſupplications to God; they will not pray to him for a contrite and new heart; they will not do violence to their wicked inclinations and fleſhly luſts: but they leave theſe things to come ſpontaneouſly, without uſing their own earneſt endeavours. Thus, notwithſtanding all their good intentions, they continue ſlaves to ſin and Satan. Nay, they have ſo little modeſty, that they ſet themſelves on a level with St. Paul in this particular, and ſay, in his words, 'To will is preſent with me; 'but how to perform that which is good, I 'find not (*d*).' But they never think on another paſſage in that Apoſtle's writings, wherein he ſays, 'I can do all things through 'Chriſt, who ſtrengtheneth me (*e*).' When ſuch irreſolute ſinners have thus gone on for a conſiderable time in forming good deſigns, in praying, now and then lamenting their wretched caſe, and making ſome faint ſtruggles againſt ſin, and do not meet with the deſired ſucceſs, they will alter their tone,

(*d*) Rom. vii. 18. (*e*) Phil. iv. 13.

and ſay, " I fain would reform my life; but I " cannot compaſs it." At laſt they proceed ſo far as to throw the blame of their impenitence on God, and to accuſe their Creator; impiouſly alledging, that he will not aſſiſt their endeavours, and that how willing ſoever they are to be converted, God will not vouchſafe to give them ſufficient grace.

Let every one who reads this ſeriouſly examine himſelf, and ſee whether he has hitherto been of ſuch a perverſe diſpoſition.

Jeſus Chriſt was alſo to ſuffer by this wicked depravity of the human will, that he might alſo expiate this ſin. Therefore whoever is conſcious that he is guilty of it, let him ſincerely repent, and humbly take refuge in the ſufferings of Chriſt; and pray to God to give him a firm reſolution of amendment, and aſſiſt him in the execution of it: Otherwiſe, notwithſtanding his good intentions, his portion will be with the workers of iniquity; and Solomon's words will be verified in him, 'The deſire of the 'ſlothful killeth; for his hands refuſe to la-'bour (*f*).' Such was Pilate's intention for releaſing the Lord Jeſus.

II.

In the next place, we are to conſider his fruitleſs endeavours for putting his deſign in

(*f*) Prov. xxi 25.

execu-

execution. In the above harmoniſed account we may obſerve the following particulars.

Firſt, How Pilate oppoſed the Jews, and as it were conteſted with them about releaſing Jeſus.

Secondly, The inſtruments by which the Jews got the better of Pilate.

Thirdly, How at length, after an ineffectual reſiſtance, he yielded to their will.

Firſt, Pilate oppoſed the Jews, and as it were conteſted with them about releaſing the bleſſed Jeſus. This was done by a two-fold queſtion, which he put to the people.

As to the firſt queſtion, we find that Pilate, in order to ſhew his willingneſs to releaſe Jeſus, ſaid again unto them, 'What will ye 'that I ſhall do with Jeſus who is called 'Chriſt, and whom ye call the King of the 'Jews?' He no longer troubled himſelf about Barabbas, having before referred it to the peoples choice, whether they would have Barabbas or Jeſus releaſed; ſo that he was now, as it were, entangled in his own toils. But what gave him moſt uneaſineſs at preſent was, how to diſpoſe of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom he was deſirous alſo to diſcharge. He therefore aſks the people, What they would have him do with this man? In this queſtion Pilate ſhews both his artifice, and the wickedneſs of his heart.

His artifice or worldly cunning appears by his putting it in the power of the Jewiſh people to releaſe Jeſus alſo; and thus he enlarges their

their privileges, which they ſo highly valued. For he ſeems not unwilling to permit them to releaſe two inſtead of one at the Paſſover, if they would but give him the leaſt intimation of their aſſent. He imagined that the Jews, who were ſo tenacious of their privileges, would have eagerly embraced this opportunity of enlarging them by interceding for the diſcharge of Jeſus of Nazareth, who was more deſerving of it than Barabbas. It was alſo a fineſſe in him, that, in his addreſs to the Jews, he mentioned Jeſus by ſuch titles as tended to prejudice the minds of the people in his favour. He ſtiles him Chriſt, and King of the Jews. As if he had ſaid, "You have for a long "time expected a Meſſiah. Now as I un-"derſtand, that this man is held to be that "perſon by a great number of the Jews, it "would become you to ſhew him more love "and eſteem. You accuſe him of giving him-"ſelf out to be the King of the Jews; and I "am informed, that the other day, at his en-"try into Jeruſalem, you publicly proclaimed "him to be a King. Conſider therefore, that "it will little redound to your honour to ſuf-"fer your King to be crucified as a ſlave." So far there was a great deal of artifice and cunning in this queſtion.

But this artifice was intermixed with wickedneſs and malice. For, in the firſt place, it ill becomes a judge to aſk the people, what he ſhall do with a priſoner: He ought to be guided

guided by the laws, according to which he ſhould proceed in puniſhing criminals. In the next place, he ridicules both our Saviour's Prophetic office of Meſſiah, and his Regal dignity; for he himſelf did not believe that Jeſus was the Meſſiah and King of the Jews, and yet he makes uſe of this as the means of promoting his releaſe. Hence Pilate's meaning ſeems to be this: If you do not regard Jeſus as an innocent man, yet you ought to ſhew a regard to your own honour and reputation; for every one will be apt to think it ſtrange, that you have conſented to have this Perſon crucified, whom by your acclamations you had ſo lately proclaimed King of Iſrael. Now reflect, what all people of any ſenſe or honour will think of ſuch an inconſiſtent conduct. But it appeared by the event what little effect ſuch repreſentations had on an inflamed, outrageous multitude: For when the queſtion was put, 'What 'ſhall I do with Jeſus?' all the people immediately cried out with one voice, 'Crucify 'him! Crucify him!

Hereupon Pilate puts another queſtion to the people, *viz.* Why, what evil hath he done?

1. Pilate again bears witneſs to the innocence of Jeſus, both interrogatively and affirmatively in theſe words: 'What evil hath he done? 'I have found no cauſe of death in him.' As if he had ſaid, It is not a ſufficient reaſon for me to order Jeſus to be crucified, that you cry

cry out in the face of open day, Crucify him! Crucify him! He muſt have been found guilty of ſome enormous crime, deſerving of ſuch an infamous and painful death. Now I have not found any ſuch crime in the man; and you yourſelves have not been able to prove him guilty. If you have any thing of weight to urge, ſpeak out; I am ready to enter on a freſh examination, and for this reaſon I aſk you, 'What evil hath he done?' For as to what has hitherto been alledged againſt him, that does not at all amount to a capital crime. Thus Pilate a third time delivers his teſtimony of the innocence of Chriſt. Upon this

2. He propoſes a medium, by way of expedient to put an end to the affair: 'I will 'therefore chaſtiſe him, and let him go.' Thus he intended to keep the middle way in this critical ſituation. His conſcience loudly proteſted againſt putting Jeſus to death; yet, in order to appeaſe the tumultuous rage of the Jews, he was for giving them ſome ſatisfaction; and to this end, he propoſed the barbarous expedient of ſcourging him after the Roman manner. But how unjuſt this proceeding was, has been already ſhewn in the ninth Conſideration. This was the method Pilate took to ſilence the people who demanded that Jeſus ſhould be crucified.

We find in this behaviour of Pilate ſome things worthy of our imitation, and ſome things which we are to avoid.

In

In his repeated remonſtrances to the people, in order to preſerve the life of the innocent Jeſus, he is a pattern to us, who ſhould thus ſtand up in behalf of God's injured honour, and the welfare of our neighbour. We ſhould ſpare no pains, avoid no labour; but riſk all the ſtorms which malice can raiſe againſt us, when engaged in ſo good a cauſe. Pilate's queſtion, 'What evil has he done?' is likewiſe commendable, and worthy of imitation; and is frequently heard among Chriſtians. If this queſtion was put on proper occaſions, many perſons wrongfully defamed would be vindicated and comforted; the mouth of malice would be ſtopped, infamous calumnies diſcouraged, and ſo many ſcandalous falſities againſt good men would no longer go current. But if, on the other hand, we only aſk what ill is ſaid of a perſon, in order to defame him, good men will ſtill ſuffer the laſh of calumny; venomous tongues will wanton in an unbounded licenciouſneſs, and audaciouſly ſpread the worſt reports of the beſt men. But if a man is ſo far prejudiced againſt the innocent as to agree to that abſurd maxim, That he of whom evil is ſpoken, muſt be in ſome meaſure guilty, it is the very triumph of the Spirit of lies. Let it rather be our equitable and generous reſolution, always to obviate calumny in this manner, "You, who ſpeak evil of "your neighbour, ought to go to him, and

"before

" before his face prove unanſwerably what evil " he has done."

But though Pilate on this occaſion did ſomething which may ſhame many Chriſtians and ſerve for their imitation; yet is he not to be approved or imitated in other particulars. He only oppoſed the rage of the multitude againſt the innocent Jeſus with words, without making uſe of the power, which God had put into his hands, for quelling the tumult. No more, indeed, is to be expected from him whoſe power does not extend beyond fair words; but from a perſon inveſted with ſufficient power and authority, it is juſtly required that he ſhould go farther in the protection of innocence. From this behaviour of Pilate we may learn the following truths.

1. God has imprinted on the conſcience of man ſuch an abhorrence of manifeſt injuſtice, that it often makes a long reſiſtance before it gives itſelf up to commit injuſtice.

Our conſcience is certainly corrupted by the Fall, and the abhorrence of evil, which was at firſt infuſed into us by our Creator, extremely weakened; yet natural conſcience frequently holds out a long time, before it ſuffers itſelf entirely to be overcome by, and brought under the yoke of, ſin. Of this we have an inſtance in Pilate. He defends himſelf with queſtions and proteſtations, rather than conſent to this iniquitous proceeding, or ſurrender himſelf a ſlave to wickedneſs and ſin. His conſcience

is ſtrongly impreſſed with the idea of the injuſtice of putting an innocent man to death. And ſince he was convinced of our bleſſed Saviour's innocence, he could not immediately bring himſelf to put him to death, and thus act contrary to the fundamental truths which were engraven on his conſcience.

This innate power of conſcience many who read this, it may be preſumed, have experienced. A man when firſt ſeduced to commit a ſin, from which he had always abſtained before, generally feels in his conſcience the moſt violent emotions, and reluctance againſt it. But by cuſtom of ſinning, his conſcience becomes enured to ſin, and his former abhorrence of evil gradually wears off. Hence every one may judge of the ſtate of his own conſcience, by attending to the faintneſs or vigour of its motions, when he is about to commit any ſin. Let us therefore treat our conſciences with the greateſt tenderneſs; and let us by no means endeavour to quench that abhorrence of evil which is naturally imprinted on the human mind; ſince, by oppoſing this divine principle within us, we act in oppoſition to God himſelf. This is the greateſt injury a man can do to his own ſoul; for it is the moſt certain way to incur the dreadful judgment of an obdurate inſenſibility.

2. The more oppoſition a man has met with in committing any heinous ſin, either from

his own conſcience or from others, the greater is the guilt he incurs by ſinning.

The chief Prieſts and Elders of the people had many difficulties to grapple with, before they compaſſed their wicked ends. Pilate, for a long time, oppoſed their unjuſt deſires; and it muſt have coſt them no ſmall pains, before they could bring over the people to vote as they directed them. But this highly aggravated their ſin; and conſequently increaſed their guilt. This circumſtance is likewiſe obſerved by St. Peter, who ſays to the Jews, 'Ye 'denied Jeſus in the preſence of Pilate, when 'he was determined to let him go: Ye denied 'the holy One, and the Juſt, and deſired a 'murderer to be granted to you (*g*).' St. Luke alſo carefully enumerates the impediments which God threw in the way of the Jews to divert them from this horrid injuſtice, in theſe words: 'And Pilate ſaid a third 'time, Why, what evil hath he done (*h*)?' Thus all the obſtructions, which God lays in a ſinner's way to prevent the perpetration of any crime, are regiſtered in God's book of remembrance, and there charged to his account. God often meets thoſe perſons who have purpoſed in their minds to commit a ſin, as formerly the Angel of the Lord met Balaam, with a flaming ſword, with dreadful threatenings and agonies of mind. He cauſes every

(*g*) Acts iii. 13, 14.
(*h*) Luke xxiii. 23.

thing

thing to obſtruct them, and gives them not only warnings and ſmitings of conſcience; but throws in their way many obſtacles to the accompliſhment of their wicked purpoſes, and ſuch as they cannot overcome without great ſtrugglings. When a man, notwithſtanding all theſe obſtacles, breaks the chains by which God would have reſtrained him, and, like a headſtrong horſe, throws off the reins with which God would have kept him in the right way, it is a guilt of the deepeſt die. It behoves every one, therefore, to examine himſelf in this point, whether he has thus ſinned againſt God, and his gracious warnings and powerful calls againſt ſin. If we have been guilty of ſuch inattention and wickedneſs, let us fly to Jeſus as our aſylum, who has ſuffered under ſuch circumſtances, that theſe heinous offences might be forgiven to the truly penitent.

3. Many perſons, to this day, are at a loſs what to do with Jeſus, *i. e.* they know not in what light to look upon the Mediator of the New Covenant. Some impiouſly make Chriſt a promoter of ſin, who has ſhed his precious blood, and acquired ſuch infinite merit, in order to procure for them from God the privilege of continuing in ſin, without any fear of puniſhment. But ſuch preſumptuous perſons may be well aſſured, that they are moſt wretchedly deceived. The bleſſed Jeſus will never ſuffer himſelf to be conſidered in ſuch a

light with impunity; for it is contrary to the great end and deſign of his miſſion.

Even penitent believers often do not rightly underſtand, in what light they are to look on Chriſt before the Divine tribunal. They look upon him very differently from what he is repreſented to them in the Goſpel. They are often afraid of him as a rigid Legiſlator and mercileſs Judge, impoſing grievous burdens on them, and rigorouſly executing the ſentence of death againſt them. Whereas, on the contrary, he is mildneſs and benignity itſelf; and promiſes reſt to all thoſe who travail and are heavy laden, if they come unto him.

Secondly, Let us conſider the inſtrument by which the Jews got the better of Pilate; and this was a tumultuous outcry of the multitude, which was aſſembled about his houſe.

To Pilate's firſt queſtion, namely, 'What 'ſhall I do with Jeſus who is called Chriſt?' he receives for anſwer, 'Crucify him.' They now tell him particularly, and without any heſitation, what he ſhould do with Chriſt. Before they had only cried out in general terms, 'Away with him;' but now they ſpecify what death he ſhould die, and deſire that the puniſhment which Barabbas deſerved, as a rebel and murderer, ſhould be inflicted on Jeſus, and that he ſhould be crucified inſtead of that malefactor. In this cry the people unanimouſly join. When Pilate ſaid therefore, 'What ſhall 'I then do with Jeſus?' they anſwered 'Cru-

'cify

'cify him! Crucify him! and by repeating the words twice, they ſhewed their eagerneſs and tumultuous impatience, and that they thirſted after our Saviour's blood.

In anſwer to Pilate's ſecond queſtion, *viz.* 'What evil hath he done?' they cannot produce a ſingle fault of which they can accuſe him with any appearance of truth; ſo that they have nothing to urge, but only to repeat a ſenſeleſs clamour, Crucify him! crucify him! The medium, which Pilate had propoſed of chaſtiſing Jeſus and letting him go, they take no notice of; but inſiſt on his being put to death by crucifixion. Whatever unſteadineſs Pilate might ſhew on this occaſion, the Jews unmovably perſiſted in their bloody purpoſe, and would by no means be diſſuaded from it. Thus this tumultuous outcry grew to ſuch a head, that St. Luke (*i*) can ſcarce find words to expreſs the impetuoſity of it. He ſays, in the firſt place, 'They were inſtant with loud 'voices *.' By this he gives us to underſtand, that as the judge, inſtead of the firmneſs be-

(*i*) Luke xxiii. 23.

* Ἐπέκειντο φωναῖς μεγάλαις. Apud THUCYDIDEM Lib. VII. verbum uſurpatur de hoſtibus *urgentibus* atque prementibus aliquem, et quidem plerumque *fugientem*, quæ ſignificatio huic loco optimè accomodari poteſt. Quum enim Judæi viderent Pilatum in hoc conflictu labaſcere ac *retrocedere*, dum non utitur judiciariâ ſuâ auctoritate, ſed in gratiam accuſatorum jubet innocentem flagellare; inde redduntur animoſiores, urgent ac premunt eum, ut crucifixionem, cujus anteambulo ſolebat eſſe flagellatio, tandem ab ipſo vel invito extorqueant. Jo. GERHARDUS, in *Harmonia Paſſionis* C. XI. p. 484.

coming his office, began to waver and give way to their clamours, ſo they became more bold and urgent in their demands; and ſince they had no proofs to adduce of our Saviour's guilt, they made up that deficiency with the vehemence of their voices. After this, the Evangeliſt adds, 'requiring * that he might be 'crucified.' They now no longer made uſe of a ſubmiſſive requeſt to obtain their ends, but aſſumed to themſelves the authority of dictating to the Governor, and peremptorily inſiſted on his compliance with their demands. In the laſt place, St. Luke ſays, 'and the voices of 'them and of the chief Prieſts prevailed.' Hence it appears, that the hoary Chiefs of the Jewiſh people likewiſe cried out as loud as their feeble age would permit, and that they were not aſhamed to join in one tumultuous cry with the rude populace, of whom, upon another occaſion, they contemptuouſly ſaid, 'This people, 'who knoweth not the Law, are curſed (*k*).' Thus the voices of the people and of the chief Prieſts were here combined together, and became ſo vehement and importunate, that they prevailed over Pilate's irreſolution and timorouſneſs †. Here likewiſe was fulfilled the pro-

* αἰτεισθαι enim non ſolùm ſignificat *petere*, ſed etiam *poſtulare*. Marc. vi. 23. Acts xiii. 21. &c.

(*k*) John vii. 49.

† Perſiſtit Evangeliſta in cœpta metaphora, quòd pontifices ac turbæ Pilatum retrocedentem clamoribus aggreſſi fuerint, ipſique *prevaluerint*, ut voluntati ipſorum ſeſe obſequentem præſtaret. Conf. verbum LXX. Exod. xvii. 11. Matth. xvi. 18. Apoc. xii. 8. Jo. GERARDUS *loco citato* p. 485.

phecy

phecy in the Pſalms (*l*), where the Meſſiah complains of this outrageous multitude in theſe words: ‘ they gaped upon me with their ‘ mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion *. We ſhall here make the following obſervation.

Sin is of ſuch a ſavage nature, that the more it is indulged and yielded to, the more violent it rages.

The more Pilate repreſented to his enemies the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, and the more he expoſtulated with them, the more vehemently did they cry out in a rage, Crucify him! Crucify him! Even the moſt cautious and prudent people are often thrown into a kind of phrenzy, when they have once drank of the intoxicating cup of Satan. Such a troubled ſea is the heart of man; that when it is once ſet in a violent agitation, it uſually throws up its own filth and ſhame. How ſhould it humble every one of us to think, that he bears in his boſom the latent ſeeds of this abomination. If any one has not been unhappily carried to ſuch exceſs, it is not owing merely to his own caution and prudence, but to the Grace of God, who has hitherto kept from him ſuch occaſions as would have ſtirred up this fury within him. But on this holy Perſon the power of ſin failed; here it

(*l*) Pſalm xxii. 13.

* Solet enim LEO, quum animal aliquod capere vult, ingentem rugitum edere, quo animalia perterrita cadunt, eique in prædam cedunt.

met with a more powerful reſtraint. 'Hi-
'therto, ſaid the Divine Juſtice, ſhall thou
'come and no farther; here ſhall thy proud
'waves be ſtayed.' Sin ſhall now no longer tyrannize over thee, O man, if thou continueſt in the Grace of God and fellowſhip of Chriſt, and buildeſt thine houſe on this immoveable rock.

Thirdly, and laſtly, mention is here made, how Pilate at length, after an ineffectual reſiſtance, yields to the will of the people, when he heard their clamours and tumultuous outcries continually increaſing. Pilate concluded, that nothing was to be done with the enraged multitude, and that it was better to give way to their violence, leſt, if their fury ſhould break out into an open inſurrection, they ſhould aſſault his houſe, and murder him and his family. He therefore reſolved to content the people, and to act as they deſired him. To this end, he not only complied with their demand, by pronouncing a judicial ſentence that Jeſus, at the deſire of the people, ſhould be crucified; but alſo diſcharged the murderer Barabbas, whom they probably congratulated on his narrow eſcape, and received into the Synagogue as one of their ſociety. Hence we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. When the natural man begins to ſlip down the precipice of ſin, his own ſtrength is not ſufficient to recover him.

When

When Pilate once departed from the plain path of juſtice, and had recourſe to ſchemes and artifice, he fell into ſuch a ſlippery way, that he could not recover himſelf. When once he began to capitulate with the people, and to yield to them, hoping that they in return might meet him half way, Satan preſſed him ſo cloſe, by means of the tumultuous populace, that he threw him to the ground, and triumphed over his faint ſtrugglings. It is the ſame ſtill with all preſumptuous men, however they may perſuade themſelves, that, notwithſtanding the many opportunities of ſinning that occur to them, they will be careful to keep within bounds, and at a proper time clear themſelves with honour. Happy is the man who, acting more wiſely, withſtands the firſt aſſaults of ſin, and avoids the opportunities of falling. Let no one rely too much on his good diſpoſitions, his natural ſtrength, or the abhorrence he may have for ſome particular ſin. A violent temptation ſoon overcomes nature, which, with all its boaſted ſtrength, is not able to withſtand its efforts. Satan is a ſubtle enemy, and by the fear of man, the hope of the favour and applauſe, or upon the urgent demands of the people, he ſtrikes a damp on the beſt inclinations. This, Pilate unhappily experienced; and the only way to come off conqueror is, to apply for aſſiſtance from above.

2. The condemnation of the Lord Jeſus, and the releaſing of Barabbas, is a type of our freedom

freedom and releaſe, by the condemnation of Chriſt.

Barabbas, as it were, repreſents the firſt Adam and his whole ſinful progeny. As this Barabbas was a rebel, ſo likewiſe was Adam; and in him all mankind were guilty of rebellion againſt God. As Barabbas was a murderer, ſo Adam, as it were, murdered all his poſterity, by ſubjecting them to the ſentence of temporal and eternal death. As Barabbas had hitherto lain in bonds and chains; ſo the whole human race naturally lies captive under the power of Satan, and bound with the chains of ſin. Moreover, on Adam and all his poſterity was this ſentence denounced, and was to have been executed, 'On the day thou eateſt 'thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die;' and this was not only a temporal, but alſo an eternal death. But as Barabbas is here, as it were, exchanged for Jeſus; as the former is ſet at liberty, and the latter crucified; ſo is the firſt Adam with all his deſcendants exchanged for the ſecond Adam, who ſtood in their ſtead. He is ſentenced to death; and they are diſcharged. This is the incomprehenſible myſtery of Divine Love, in which Juſtice and Mercy have kiſſed each other, and joined in the moſt amiable harmony. Juſtice is ſatisfied; ſince the ſentence of death which it had pronounced is executed, though not on the ſinner, but on the Surety. Mercy may receive the ſinner into favour, and ſet him at liberty; ſince the Surety permitted

the ſentence of death to be vicariouſly executed on himſelf. O miracle of love, which it becomes us humbly to admire, and gratefully to adore! How can we ſufficiently praiſe our merciful Saviour for thus ſtanding as a victim in our ſtead, and ſubmitting to be ſentenced to death, amidſt the hideous outcries of an outrageous multitude!

But let us be very careful that we do not act over again this tragedy, which the impious Jews acted here. We have within us a Barabbas, namely, the old man, who is a rebel againſt the Divine Majeſty and a tranſgreſſor of his commands, and conſequently deſerves to be crucified. Far be it from us, that by ſuffering him to live, we ſhould crucify the Son of God afreſh by our ſins. Far be it from us, to fulfil the wicked luſts of the fleſh, and to ſuppreſs the good motions of the Holy Spirit. Far be it from us, by continuance in ſin, to ſpare the old, and do violence to the new, man. Laſtly, far be it from us to deliver a criminal, out of an abject fear of, or complaiſance to, man, and to injure a true member and faithful ſervant of Chriſt. May the Lord of all mercy ever preſerve us from treading in theſe footſteps of Pilate and the Jews! Amen.

THE

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful and ever-living Saviour! bleſſed be thy holy name for thy goodneſs in ſtanding as a victim in our ſtead, and ſubmitting to be condemned to die, that we might be happily acquitted. We adore this thy ſtupendous love, and humbly beſeech thee to make us partakers of all the ſalutary fruits of it. Make a deep and laſting impreſſion in our minds of this aſtoniſhing exchange, and thereby powerfully unite us the more cordially to love thee, the great purchaſer of our freedom, and to order our whole lives according to thy good pleaſure. May we, on the other hand, by godly ſorrow and repentance, mortify our old man as already condemned in thy condemnation; and ſo deprive him of all his power, that he may never recover his dominion over us, but that thy Holy Spirit may live and dwell in us. Thus for the great travail of thy ſoul, which thou didſt undergo for our ſake, thou mayeſt have pleaſure in us as thy redeemed, and receive us into the Manſions of bliſs and glory. Amen.

CONSIDERATION XII.

The indignities which the LORD JESUS *ſuffered in* Pilate's *Judgment-hall.*

'(*a*) THEN Pilate therefore took Jeſus 'and ſcourged him. And the ſol-'diers of the Governor led Jeſus away into the 'common-hall, and they called together the 'whole band. And they ſtripped him, and 'clothed him in a purple robe. And when 'they had platted a crown of thorns, they put 'it about his head, and a reed in his right 'hand; and they mocked him, and began to 'ſalute him, ſaying, Hail King of the Jews! 'And they did ſpit upon him, and took the 'reed and ſmote him on the head, and bow-'ing the knee, worſhipped him: And they 'ſmote him with their hands.'

In theſe words we have an account of the ſhocking indignities, which the Lord Jeſus ſuffered in Pilate's Judgment-hall.

Hitherto our bleſſed Saviour, had been ſince in the Governor's houſe, was free from any rude inſults. Pilate had zealouſly laboured to deliver him out of the hands of his blood-thirſty enemies. He had ſucceſſively given them ſeveral teſtimonies of his innocence by repeated de-

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 27 —— 30. Mark xv. 16 —— 19. John xix. 1, 2, 3.

cla-

clarations; and though he had propoſed to chaſtiſe Jeſus and then let him go, no violence had as yet been offered to him. But a more cruel, bloody, and moving ſcene now preſents itſelf, where the Son of God, as he himſelf had foretold, is delivered up into the hands of ſinners, and left to the diſcretion of the ſavage and mercileſs ſoldiers. Let us therefore, with an attentive and ſorrowful mind, conſider theſe baſe indignities offered to the Lord of Glory. Let us ſee what good effect the conſideration of theſe execrable doings will produce in a ſoul, poſſeſſed with a real love and affection for his crucified Saviour.

Theſe indignities, which our bleſſed Lord here endured, may be conſidered in three different lights.

Firſt, As they were painful.

Secondly, As they were ludicrous.

Thirdly, As they ſhewed the utmoſt contempt.

I.

The painful indignities which our Saviour endured, were, the ſcourging, the crowning him with thorns, and the rude blows of the ſoldiers.

The ſcourging is thus deſcribed by St. John (*b*), 'Then Pilate therefore took Jeſus, 'and ſcourged him.' He had before ſaid to the Jews, 'Take ye him, and judge him ac-

(*b*) John xix. 1.

'cording

'cording to your law (*c*);' but as the Jews had declined this, it is afterwards ſaid, 'Then Pi-'late took Jeſus.'

Alas! Pilate would never have taken away our Redeemer, had it not been for our ſins, and that inexpreſſible love which his heavenly Father bore to the human race, who ſent him down from his own boſom; for 'God ſo 'loved the world, that he gave his only be-'gotten Son, and delivered him up for us 'all (*d*). One is here taken as a ranſom for all; and ſuffers death, that all the reſt may be pardoned.

Thanks be to thee, O heavenly Father, who, for my ſalvation, haſt ſent thy beloved Son, and given him up to be reviled, inſulted, and put to death! Thanks be to thee, O Son of the Father, who didſt permit thyſelf to be led away, which, by the leaſt exertion of thy Almighty Power, thou couldeſt have eaſily prevented. O thou moſt precious gift of Heaven! preſerve me, that I may never treat thee with ſuch levity and contempt as Pilate did; but rather that in humble faith and pure love, I may ſtretch out my hand and lay hold on thee as my ſalvation. Grant alſo that all, who have laid hold of thee in true faith, may diligently keep thy commandments, and walk worthy of thy Goſpel (*e*).

(*c*) Chap. xviii. 31. (*d*) John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32.
(*e*) Col. ii. 6.

When

When Pilate had taken our bleſſed Saviour, and carried him into his Judgment-hall, the Evangeliſts tell us that he ſcourged him. It is not to be ſuppoſed, that Pilate ſcourged Jeſus with his own hands *, ſince this would have been an action much beneath his dignity. He only ordered the ſoldiers to ſcourge him; for what one perſon cauſes to be done by another, is juſtly imputed to him that commands it, as if he himſelf had done it (*f*). Let all thoſe who ſeduce others to ſin, and either by their command, advice, or evil example, promote wicked and unjuſt proceedings, take notice of this; and be well aſſured, that every act of injuſtice, every ſin which has been committed by their perſuaſion or authority, ſhall be placed to their account, and that they ſhall one day be puniſhed for thoſe ſins by the righteous Judge of all fleſh.

But the Lord Jeſus was not only beaten with rods, which was reckoned the leaſt ignominious by the Romans †; but with thongs or cords, a puniſhment peculiar to the meaneſt ſlaves; eſpecially thoſe who were ſentenced to be crucified. For this end, the criminal was

* Sic BEDA in Marc. xv. ſic BARTHIUS *Adverſar. Sacr.* xlviii. C. 2. Nec ſimpliciter id rejiciendum cenſet SAGITTARIUS *de paſſione Jeſu Chriſti*, part. II. p. 576.

(*f*) Acts ii. 23. iii. 15. xxii. 24, 25,

† Liberos homines *virgis*, ſervos autem *loris* cædi ſolitos fuiſſe, locis veterum probat LAURENTIUS RAMIRESIUS de PRADO in *Pentecontarcho*, cap. 37. p. 218. At per *Porciam* legem nec virgis in civem Romanum ſævire licebat, uti CICERO teſtatur in oratione *pro C. Rabirio* C. XII.

not laid on the ground, and ſtretched out as among the Jews (*g*), but he ſtood with his hands bound, and faſtened to a poſt or pillar *; ſo that both the breaſt and back were expoſed. Then the ſoldiers appointed to execute this puniſhment uſually ſcourged him on the naked back with thongs, to the ends of which pieces of iron-wire were ſometimes tacked.

God had expreſly ordered the Jews (*h*), that they ſhould not give a malefactor more than forty ſtripes; but among the Romans, the number of ſtripes was not limited, but given according to the crime of which the malefactor had been guilty, and the diſcretion of the judge. It is not to be doubted, but that theſe cruel and impious ſoldiers now inflicted this puniſhment with the utmoſt ſeverity; for they had no orders to ſpare the ſacred body of the Lord Jeſus. On the contrary, Pilate by thus ſcourging our bleſſed Lord, which uſually preceded crucifixion †, might poſſibly direct that Jeſus ſhould be ſeverely ſcourged, with this view, *viz.* that the ſight

(*g*) Deut. xxv. 2.

* Ritum flagellationis Romanæ diligentiſſimè expoſuit SAGITTARIUS *de Paſſione Domini*, Part. II. p. 575. qui breviorem fuiſſe columnam putat, et quæ non multum ultra femora ſurrexerit. Alii tamen, qui hanc columnam eandem eſſe putant cum *tympano*, aliam columnæ figuram concipiunt. Conf. de *tympano*, THEOD. HASÆUM, in *biblioth. Brem. tom* .VI. p. 562. ſeqq. & vide figuram ejus in Johan. BRAUNII comment. *in Ep. ad. Hebræos*. p. 806. (*h*) Deut. xxv. 3.

† Sunt nimirum, qui hanc flagellationem conſiderârunt *tanquam præparationem ad crucifixionem*; ſunt, qui eam conſiderant, *ut ultimum conatum Pilati* ad animos Judæorum *miſericordiâ*

ſight of his lacerated body, covered with ſanguine torrents, might move the hard hearted Jews to pity the priſoner, and to deſiſt from their obſtinacy in oppoſing his releaſement. Hence it may be eaſily conceived, with what inhuman fury this ſcourging was executed. The ſoldiers probably had their thongs interwoven with iron-wire; ſo that they not only fetched blood, but even tore the fleſh from the bones *. This appears the more probable, as our bleſſed Saviour was ſo infeebled by this ſcourging, that afterwards he had not ſtrength enough to drag his croſs to the place of execution.

Thus, O my Saviour, thine own prophecy, namely, They ſhall ſcourge the Son of Man (*i*), was fulfilled and written in letters of blood on thy ſacred back. Thus was accompliſhed what thou didſt foretel by the mouth of the Prophet, namely, 'I gave my back to the ſmiters (*k*)'. But, O bleſſed Redeemer, why muſt Thou thus

erga Jeſum implendos. Optimè faciunt, qui *utramque* hypotheſin conjungunt. Pilatus ſcilicet conſtituerat, ſi nihil rationes valerent, voluntati Judæorum obſecundare, atque ita Jeſum flagellando ad crucem præparare. Nihilominùs antequam crucifixionem actu cum flagellatione conjungeret, tentare prius voluit, an Judæi in atrociſſimâ flagellatione acquieſcere vellent. ITAIAC. LYDIUS, in *florum ſparſione ad paſſionem Jeſu Chriſti*, p. 174. & LAMPIUS in *Johann. tom.* III. p, 560, 561.

* Quâ ſævitiâ olim Romani in flagellationibus uſi ſint, ex loco EUSEBII colligi poteſt, qui *Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib.* IV. *C.* XV. *Obſtupeſcebant*, inquit, *omnes, qui aderant, quum illos viderent partim flagris ad intimas uſque venas & arterias laniatos, adeo ut corporis membra penitus recondita & viſcera ipſa conſpectui paterent.* Conf. SAGITTARIUM *de Martyrum Cruciatibus.*

(*i*) Luke xviii. 32. (*k*) Iſaiah l. 6.

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preſent thy ſacred back? It was I that have turned my back on my Creator, and conſequently was to have received theſe ſtripes; it was I that deſerved to have felt the ſcourge of the Divine wrath to all eternity. But thou, O merciful Son of the Father, didſt ſtand in the ſtead of thy guilty ſervant, and receivedſt the ſtrokes which were due to my ſins. Praiſed be thy name for every ſtripe thou didſt receive; every drop of thy ſacred blood, which was thus barbarouſly ſhed by the ſcourges of the inhuman ſoldiers! But this thy, heavenly Father has appointed to be the healing balſam for the wounds of my conſcience. Whenever I am tempted to ſin, let me think on theſe ſufferings, and let mine eyes run down with penetential tears. And though thou doſt not require that I ſhould ſcourge and lacerate my body, as a puniſhment for my ſins; yet enable me, that, according to thy precepts, I may by repentance daily crucify the fleſh with its affections and luſts, break its ſtubborn will, and mortify its deeds. But if, in following thee, I ſhould be honoured with ſtripes for thy name ſake, enable me to receive the ſtrokes with the ſame joy as thine Apoſtles did (*l*). May our ſouls be healed by thy meritorious ſtripes (*m*)!

The ſecond painful inſult offered to the Son of God, was the crowning him with thorns. The rage and cruelty of the ſoldiers was not ſatisfied by the bloody furrows, which they had plowed on our Saviour's back.

(*l*) Acts v. 41. (*m*) 1 Pet. ii. 24.

They do not ſpare his ſacred head, but make a wreath of thorns, and preſs it on his head, ſo that the prickles were forced into his temples among the veins with which thoſe parts abound, and the blood ran down his face in purple ſtreams.

Here a faithful ſoul may ſay, Freſh fountains of blood are opened to waſh away the ſtains and pollutions, which I have contracted. It was the order of my Creator, that, after the Fall, the ground ſhould bring forth thorns and thiſtles, as a token of the curſe. Here therefore, I now ſee him who is crowned with thorns and as it were, clothed in my curſe, to procure me the bleſſing. Here I ſee the ram that was to be offered in my ſtead, as it were, caught in a thicket (*n*). Alas! the wild uncultivated ſoil of my heart naturally bears nothing but thorns and thiſtles. O my Saviour! how many ſeeds of thy Divine Truths have been choaked with the thorns of worldly ſollicitudes, which I have ſuffered to take root in my ſoul, ſo that they could not grow up to bear fruit in due ſeaſon. As thy head was here ſtuck with thorns, ſo would my ſoul have been inceſſantly tortured with the goads of an evil conſcience, and torn, as it were with thorns and briars (*o*). How amazing is thy love, O my Saviour! Wen a regal crown was offered thee by the Jewiſh people, thou didſt fly from it; but thou didſt willingly bow thy ſacred

(*n*) Gen. xxii. 13. (*o*) Judges. viii. 7, 16.

head

head under a crown of thorns, hereby confirming the teſtimony that thou hadſt given, that thy kingdom is not of this world.

The third painful indignity which our bleſſed Saviour endured was likewiſe from the ſoldiers, whoſe frequent blows bruiſed his ſacred face and head, and drove the thorns deeper into his temples; ſo that it would have been no wonder, if under ſuch inexpreſſible pains, embittered by inſult, he had fainted away. This muſt naturally have been the caſe, had not the Divinity within him ſupported him, and reſerved him for ſtill greater tortures.

O my Saviour, theſe inſulting blows were to have fallen on me. It was I that ſhould have been eternally under the buffetings of Satan; but thou, my bleſſed Repreſentative, didſt take them on thee, and ſufferedſt thyſelf to be beaten, like a deſpicable ſlave. Alas! how can a poor worm be inflamed with anger at the leaſt blow, and account it an affront which muſt be avenged by the blood of the offender? whereas thou, who art the King of kings, and the Lord of glory, haſt with the greateſt patience and ſerenity ſuffered theſe repeated indignities. Thanks be to thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, who by all theſe painful kinds of ſuffering didſt ſanctify my pains! If thou ſhouldeſt be pleaſed to afflict my body with painful ſufferings, O impart to me that patience and reſignation which thou didſt ſhew on this occaſion! Alas! I am aſhamed of my impa-

impatience and want of courage, when I conſider how many martyrs, and many of them of the weaker ſex, have for thy ſake, undergone the acuteſt pains, and the moſt cruel tortures which infernal malice could invent, not only with patience, but even with joy and triumph *. Did theſe unreſiſting, innocent ſheep patiently ſuffer ſuch inhuman barbarities for thy ſake, O thou crucified Saviour, and am I ſo fond of myſelf, that I can ſcarce bear an inſulting look or opprobrious name? O ſtrengthen me with thy Spirit, and arm me with thy courage, conſtancy, and patience, that I may be able, if called upon, to glorify thee by painful ſufferings.

II.

We now proceed, in the next place, to conſider the ludicrous indignities which were offered to the immaculate Lamb of God; and theſe mockeries conſiſted partly in actions, and partly in words.

* The Author here enumerates the variety of tortures, which were inflicted on the primitive Martyrs; but as they reſemble thoſe refinements of cruelty which were lately practiſed in France on the wretched *Damien*, I have omitted them as too ſhocking to Engliſh readers, whoſe humanity will readily excuſe me for drawing a veil over ſuch a horrid ſcene. Whoever has a mind to ſee an account of theſe inhuman barbarities, may conſult KORTHOLT's *Tractatus de perſecutione Eccl. Primævæ*, GALLONIOUS & SAGITTARIUS *De Cruciatibus Martyrum*, &c. *W.*

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The ludicrous actions all tended to ridicule the Kingly office of the Lord Jeſus. As his Prophetic office had been ridiculed in the houſe of Caiaphas, by blind-folding him, ſtriking him with the palms of their hands, and then ſaying to him, Propheſy unto us, who is it that ſtruck thee; ſo here in the houſe of the civil judge, his Regal office is mocked and ridiculed; and thus the good confeſſion which he made of his kingdom before Pilate, and of which theſe ſcoffers had got ſome hint, was made matter of laughter, and inſulting mirth.

How ſenſibly muſt this prophane mockery have affected our bleſſed Saviour! If a pious Chriſtian, who has a due eſteem for the honour of God's Word, is pierced to the heart when he hears Divine Truths abuſed by the ludicrous tongues of prophane ſcoffers; O how was the ſoul of the bleſſed Jeſus pierced, at hearing theſe miſcreants exerciſe their raillery on this ſacred decree of his heavenly Father, 'I 'have ſet my King upon my holy hill of Sion,' and ſtriving who could make the moſt ludicrous ſarcaſms on his glorious confeſſion, that he was a King! Here we may obſerve two circumſtances, which render this mockery of our bleſſed Lord the more criminal.

Firſt, It was acted in the very hall of judgment, in the palace of the Imperial governor. It gives a keener edge to abuſe and injuſtice, when it is offered in a place where one may

naturally expect to find protection and ſuccour. How muſt he, 'who loveth righteouſneſs and 'hateth iniquity (*p*),' be grieved to ſee a court of judgment which ought to be the aſylum of perſecuted righteouſneſs, and oppreſſed innocence, changed into a theatre of prophane mockeries and brutal inſolence?

Secondly, The whole Cohort of the Roman ſoldiers, which conſiſted of ſeveral hundreds *, was here got together; for we are informed, that they called together the whole Band. The affronts, the vexation and ſorrow which ten inhuman reprobates may cauſe to a good man, when they are left at liberty to uſe him at diſcretion, are inexpreſſible; how great then muſt have been the outrages committed by five or ſix hundred rude ſoldiers, inſtigated by the ſpirit of malice and cruelty! The Roman ſoldiers were generally the moſt abandoned among that people, and openly committed all ſorts of crimes, without ſo much as the ſhadow of a natural modeſty or virtue. They were trained up in their natural licenciouſneſs, and immerſed in all kinds of wickedneſs. Was the pious Job grieved that he ſhould be mocked by thoſe, whom he would have diſdained to have ſet

(*p*) Pſalm xlv. 7.

* Ten Bands or Cohorts conſtituted a Legion. Now as the Roman Legion conſiſted of 6666, ſometimes more and ſometimes leſs, there were 422, or 500, and ſometimes 600 men, in each Cohort. *Vide* JUSTUM LIPSIUM *de Militia Romanorum*, Lib. III. Dial. 4.

with

with the dogs of his flock (*q*)? How muſt it have affected the bleſſed Jeſus, to be given up to the outrages of ſuch a ſwarm of riotous ſoldiers! Here the meek Lamb of God ſtood ſurrounded with ravening wolves. Here, for our ſake, the only begotten Son of God was delivered into the hands of ſinners.

O my Saviour, may a pious Chriſtian ſay, thy love to mankind muſt have been infinite, which could bring thee to a reſolution of undergoing ſuch numberleſs abuſes, and horrid outrages, for my ſake! Endleſs thanks be aſcribed to thee for humbling thyſelf ſo low, that I might in due time be exalted. Praiſed be thy name, for ſuffering thyſelf to be reviled and inſulted by the very refuſe of mankind, that I might be glorified with thy Saints. Unfeigned thanks be to thee, for ſuffering thyſelf to be brought into the council of the ungodly, that I might be delivered from their company, and advanced to the aſſembly of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in heaven. Make me alſo willing, through the knowledge of this thine inconceivable love, to ſubmit for thy ſake to abuſe, and to be mocked and inſulted for thy name, not only by my ſuperiors, but even by the meaneſt of the people. Arm me with thy ſpirt of patience, when the undiſcerning world inſolently mocks that hidden glory which I have in thee, and treats me as a diſpiſed laughing-ſtock. Thou haſt ſanctified

(*q*) Chap. xxx. i.

my

my reproach; grant therefore that I may bear it with joy, and infinitely prefer it to the ſinful pleaſures and honours of the world.

But let us particularly conſider the ſeveral kinds of the ludicrous indignities which the Lord Jeſus endured.

1. The rude ſoldiers, inſtead of a golden crown, or a wreath of laurel or ivy, which Generals and Conquerors in thoſe times uſed to wear, contemptuouſly bound his ſacred temples with a crown of thorns; now this was not only extremely painful, as we have obſerved above, but likewiſe implied a moſt abuſive mockery. For, by this thorny wreath, the ſoldiers ironically ſignified, that Chriſt had deſerved no better by his extraordinary atchievements, *&c.*

2. They put on him a purple mantle, or a ſcarlet robe. Every common ſoldier among the Romans anciently wore a mantle or upper garment * over his armour. But the colour of this robe, which according to St. Matthew was ſcarlet †, and, according to St. Mark and St. John, purple ‡, ſufficiently ſhewed that it had belonged to none of the common ſoldiers, but to ſome general officer. Now purple, un-

* Χλαμυς ut *Matthæus* vocat, erat veſtimentum *militare*; unde apud PLAUTUM, quum quis militis perſonam indueret, dicitur: *Etiam opus eſt chlamyde et machærâ.* Idem videtur fuiſſe indumenti genus, quod alias *ſagum* vel *paludamentum* dici ſolebat.

† χλαμυδα κοκινην, chlamydem coccineam.

‡ ἱματιον πορφυρουν, veſtem purpuream. *W.*

der

der which name ſcarlet was alſo comprehended *, was a colour uſed only by kings and perſons of the higheſt diſtinction †. Thus the ſoldiers intended a further inſult on the kingly dignity of our bleſſed Saviour, by clothing him in an old caſt-off robe that had belonged to ſome perſon of diſtinction, as Herod had before clothed him in a gorgeous robe.

3. Inſtead of a ſceptre or truncheon, which the Generals among the Romans alſo uſually bore, they put a reed in his hand; to denote that his kingdom, which he boaſted of before Pilate, and which St. Paul juſtly terms 'a 'kingdom which cannot be moved (*r*),' was a weak and unſtable kingdom, and that for his ſubjects to expect any protection from him was to lean on a broken reed (*s*).

4. After the ſoldiers had thus dreſſed him up as a mock-king, they bow the knee before him, pretending to do him homage, according to the cuſtom of the Orientals, *&c.* when they approached ſovereign princes.

* Nimirum quidquid inſigniter rubet, *purpureum* apud antiquos dicebatur. Quum igitur *coccineus* color proximè accederet ad purpuram, atque *in purpuras Tyrias trahatur*, teſte PLINIO Lib. XXI. C. 8, hinc nomina iſtorum colorum apud poſanos etiam auctores inter ſe permutantur, uti oſtendit BOCHARTUS, *Hieroz. Part* II. p. 733. Ceterùm de hâc veſte ſingularibus diſſertationibus CASPAR SAGITTARIUS & CHRISTOPH. FRANCKIUS commentati ſunt.

† Imperatoribus in prælium exeuntibus paludamentum album aut purpureum dari ſolebat. VALERIUS MAXIMUS Lib. I. C. 6.

(*r*) Heb. xii. 28. (*s*) Iſa. xxxvi. 6.

Theſe

Theſe inſulting mockeries were accompanied with ridiculing words and taunting reflections, which were likewiſe levelled at Chriſt's kingly dignity. For as the Romans uſed to ſay to their Emperors, Hail Cæſar; ſo theſe miſcreants, with a ludicrous tone and geſture, cried out, 'Hail King of the Jews!' a title which they had borrowed from Pilate, who, in his expoſtulations with the chief Prieſts and people, had often called Jeſus the King of the 'Jews.'

Thanks be to thee my Saviour, may a pious Chriſtian ſay, for ſuffering thy ſacred head to be diſgraced with a mock-crown of thorns, that my head might be adorned with the wreath of victory over ſin, death, and the grave, and my temples ſurrounded with a crown of glory that fadeth not away!

Thanks be to thee for permitting thyſelf to be diſguiſed in the mock pageantry of a purple robe, that I might be arrayed in the white robe of thy innocence, and be clothed with immortality.

Thanks be to thee, who didſt permit a reed to be put into thy hand, inſtead of a ſceptre of righteouſneſs which is the ſceptre of thy kingdom, to denote that thou wilt not break the bruiſed reed that is committed to thy care, and wilt ſuffer no man to pluck it out of thy hand (*t*).

(*t*) John x. 28.

Thanks



Thanks be to thee for ſuffering thyſelf to be mocked by an ironical ſalutation, and bowing of the knee! What they did in railing I will do out of a religious awe to the Divine Majeſty. I throw myſelf proſtrate at thy feet. I adore thy glorious Majeſty, to which every knee ſhall bow. I willingly do homage to thee, thou King of kings! I kiſs thy righteous ſceptre. Hail King of Saints, and Lord of Glory!

III.

We come, in the laſt place, to conſider the contemptuous indignities which were offered to our bleſſed Lord; and theſe were as follows:

1. They ſtripped the Lord of glory of his garments, and expoſed his holy, pure, and undefiled body, the tabernacle of the Deity, naked before ſuch an inſolent and profligate rabble. For it was a cuſtom among the Romans previouſly to ſtrip thoſe who were to be ſcourged. Here, alas, was verified that mournful prophecy concerning the Meſſiah in the Pſalms (*u*), 'Reproach hath broken 'my heart, and I am full of heavineſs: I 'looked for ſome to take pity, but there was 'none, and for comforters, but I found 'none.'

When a pious Chriſtian reflects on this, he cannot fail to give vent to his gratitude in theſe

(*u*) Pſalm lxix. 20.

or

or the like words: Eternal thanks be aſcribed to thee, O my Saviour, who didſt thus expiate the diſgrace of my nakedneſs, and again obtain for me the robe of innocence which I had loſt by the Fall. Grant that I may not ſuffer thee to wander about naked in thy poor members, by refuſing to clothe them when it is in my power to do it.

2. Another reproachful abuſe was, that they ſpit in our Saviour's face. The ſame indignity had already been offered him in Caiaphas's houſe, where ſome of the members of the Sanhedrim, after Jeſus had declared himſelf to be the Son of God, had ſpit on him; and their wicked example had been immediately followed by the officers of the court. This was ſuch a baſe inſult as could ſcarce be exceeded. O how muſt the amiable benign countenance of the Lord Jeſus have been diſfigured with ſtreaming blood, cruel bruiſes, and the nauſeous ſpittle of this inſolent rabble.

O my Redeemer, may a pious Chriſtian here ſay, did it coſt thee ſo many indignities to obtain for me the favour of lifting up my face before God, with confidence and joy? O thou expreſs image of the father, thou corporeal repreſentative of the inviſible God, haſt thou, for my ſake, ſuffered that glorious face to be ſpit on, whoſe effulgence ſhone like the meridian ſun on the mount of transfiguration? How ſhall I ſufficiently adore thy ſtupendous love, and amazing

mazing condeſcenſion! May that face, which was then covered with ſhameful ſpitting, preſent itſelf to me in the hour of death; and do thou comfort and animate my ſoul at that dark criſis with the light of thy countenance. Let it be to me a pledge that, however my face may be fallen and disfigured in death, on the day of the Reſurrection it ſhall ſhine like the ſun, and be made like to thy glorious face, which now beams forth heavenly radiance in the manſions of bliſs. How then can I ſufficiently praiſe thee for all the marks of thy love, patience, and long-ſuffering, which, for the atonement of my ſins, and as a pattern for my imitation, thou didſt ſhew under all theſe painful abuſes, and contemptuous indignities!

THE PRAYER.

ETernal thanks and endleſs praiſe be to thee, O Lamb of God, who in obedience to thy heavenly Father, and out of thy unſpeakable love to our ſouls, didſt enter on ſuch a ſeries of ſufferings, which we, at this diſtance of time, cannot contemplate without ſhuddering. How ſhould we have behaved had we, in thy ſtead, been deſtined to endure ſuch pains, ſuch mockery, ſuch inſults, and abuſes? How ſhould we have opened our mouths, and poured forth invectives and threatenings! But thou didſt ſtand like a Lamb, that openeth not his mouth. No threatenings or railings came from thy ſacred

cred lips. Every one was allowed to vent his malicious rage againſt thee, every one was allowed to inſult and to ſtrike thee; yet all the pains, all the inſults and mockeries, thou didſt patiently endure as from the hands of thy righteous Father. The outrageous waves of inſults and indignities thou didſt permit to paſs over thy tranquil heart; being certain that the Father would deliver thee from this hour, would crown thee with praiſe and honour, and command every knee to bow at thy ſacred name. Grant, O Lord, that this part of thy ſufferings may not only occaſion a mere tranſitory emotion in our minds, that will vaniſh at the firſt appearance of temptation; but that it may make an indelible impreſſion on our hearts. Bleſs this part of thy ſufferings to all our ſouls. May it be a terror to the ſecure, the licentious, and impenitent, that they may hence learn what ſin is, and how ſeverely it has been puniſhed in thy ſacred perſon. Let it be alſo a comfort to the humble, contrite, and troubled ſpirit, that it may in faith lay hold on the merits of theſe thy manifold ſufferings, and be made willing to follow thee through reproach and inſults. Grant this for the ſake of thy love. Amen.

CONSIDERATION XIII.

A farther attempt of Pilate *to releaſe* CHRIST.

'(a) PILATE therefore went forth again, and ſaith unto the Jews, Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jeſus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate ſaith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief Prieſts therefore and officers ſaw him, they cried out, ſaying, Crucify him! crucify him! Pilate ſaith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him; for I find no fault in him. The Jews anſwered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God.'

In theſe words we have an account of a new attempt made by Pilate to releaſe the Lord Jeſus. We ſhall

Firſt, Conſider the means he uſed to compaſs it.

Secondly, The effect produced by thoſe means.

(a) John xix. 4—7.

I.

The means Pilate made uſe of were as follows.

Firſt, He again gives teſtimony of the innocence of Jeſus.

Secondly, He preſents the Lord Jeſus to the Jews in a very deplorable condition, in order to move their pity.

Firſt, Pilate gave a repeated public teſtimony of our bleſſed Saviour's innocence. For this end, Pilate goes out of his hall of judgment; for it is ſaid above by the Evangeliſt (*b*), 'Pilate 'therefore went forth again.' However, Pilate was very unſucceſsful; for he moves from place to place, tries ſeveral expedients; and yet miſcarries in every one of them. This is a Divine Judgment, that thoſe ſchemes which are planned in oppoſition to God's decrees, ſhould prove abortive. On the other hand, the Pſalmiſt tells us, that 'whatſoever the juſt 'man doeth ſhall proſper (*c*).'

When Pilate was gone out of the hall, and had taken the bleſſed Jeſus with him, he addreſſed the Jews in theſe words, 'Behold 'I bring him forth unto you, that ye may 'know that I find no fault in him.' Pilate had, indeed, before given orders that Barabbas ſhould be releaſed, and delivered Jeſus to be crucified; being urged by the vehement out-

(*b*) Verſe 4. (*c*) Pſalm i. 3.

cries

cries of the people. For that end, he had ordered our bleſſed Saviour to be cruelly ſcourged by the ſoldiers, according to the Roman cuſtom *, as a prelude to the execution. But his conſcience ſtill ſtruggled againſt putting an innocent perſon to death; and he is for trying, whether Jeſus might be releaſed even after he had been ſcourged, without undergoing any farther puniſhment. Pilate therefore pretends that he had made uſe of the ſcourge, as a kind of torture, in order to extort from the priſoner a confeſſion of his moſt ſecret practices (*d*); but aſſures the people, that after a moſt ſevere ſcourging, he can find no manner of fault in him.

Divine Providence certainly over-ruled this remarkable circumſtance, and ordered that Pilate, after ſuch an inhuman abuſe of our bleſſed Saviour by the hands of his ſoldiers, ſhould again make a public declaration of his innocence, the knowledge of which is to be looked on as the moſt important article in the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion. For by this means, the Sacrifice for the ſins of the whole world is preſented by Pilate to the Prieſts of

* Thoſe who were condemned to be crucified among the Romans were uſually ſcourged by the ſoldiers, previouſly to that ignominious puniſhment, which was inflicted only on ſlaves and rebels. *W.*

(*d*) See Acts xxii. 24, Where St. Paul was going to be examined by ſcourging: but claimed the privilege of a Roman citizen, whom it was not lawful to ſcourge, eſpecially unheard and uncondemned. *W.*

the Jewiſh people, in its ſpotleſs innocence, according to the law; ſo that, before it is ſlain, they may themſelves take a view of it, and ſee that it is without blemiſh.

But the heavenly Father never would have permitted his beloved Son to have been thus barbarouſly treated by the Roman ſoldiers, if no treſpaſſes had been imputed to him. Though the eyes of the Roman judge were utterly incapable of ſeeing into this myſtery; yet the Holy Spirit aſſures us (*e*), 'That God has made him 'to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin.' Hence Chriſt is likewiſe termed, 'the Lamb of God 'that taketh away the ſins of the world (*f*).' It was for our ſins therefore, that the Son of the Moſt High was inſulted and reviled, was crowned with thorns, buffeted, and cruelly ſcourged. Though the civil judge could find no fault in him; yet, as our Surety, he was held guilty at the Divine Tribunal of all the crimes, which the whole race of mankind had ever committed. This was the motive which induced the Supreme Judge of the world to give this delegate judge the power of thus ſcourging his only Son, ſince all the ſins of the world were now imputed to him.

Secondly, Pilate made uſe of another expedient to prevent the execution of our bleſſed Lord; and this was to preſent the bleſſed Jeſus to the Jews in a very deplorable condition, in order to move their pity and compaſſion. Hitherto our bleſſed

(*e*) 2 Cor. v. 21. (*f*) John i. 29.

Saviour

Saviour had been ſcourged and abuſed in the hall of judgment; but now Pilate again takes him out of the hall, and preſents him to the Jews. After he had endeavoured to gain over the people, by addreſſing himſelf to their ears by a public teſtimony of our Saviour's innocence, he now places the bleſſed Jeſus before their eyes in the moſt deplorable condition, in hopes that ſuch a moving ſpectacle might yet kindle in their cold, blood-thirſty hearts, ſome ſmall ſpark of compaſſion. For this purpoſe, though he had before ordered the old purple robe to be put on the Lord Jeſus, it was now probably hung over his ſhoulders in ſuch a looſe manner when he preſented him to the people, that they might ſee his mangled body, covered all over with blood, ſtripes, and bruiſes.

The Evangeliſt here mentions

1. The appearance which our bleſſed Saviour made, when he was brought forth before the people.

2. The words which Pilate ſpoke on the occaſion.

1. The appearance which our bleſſed Lord made is deſcribed in theſe words: 'Then 'came Jeſus forth, wearing the crown of 'thorns and the purple robe.' Thus it appears, that the wreath of thorns which had been preſſed on his head by the inſolent ſoldiers, and the old purple robe, which had been hung about him by way of

ridicule, were not taken off: But the Lord Jeſus was publicly brought forth to the people with theſe marks of contempt; and preſented to them as a king, who had been ſufficiently mortified and chaſtiſed, for his affectation of ſovereignty. Here were, indeed, verified theſe words of Iſaiah: 'He hath no 'form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee 'him, there is no beauty, that we ſhould de-'ſire him (*g*).'

2. The words which Pilate ſpoke on this occaſion were as follows: 'Behold the man!' As if he had ſaid, ſee what a deplorable condition this unhappy man is in! Allowing that he has been guilty of ſome petty crimes, or has offended you; yet now has he been ſufficiently puniſhed for it. I think you may very well put up with ſuch a bloody ſatisfaction, and, at leaſt, ſpare his miſerable life. Thus Pilate was for moving the people to compaſſion, though he himſelf had acted an unjuſt and unmerciful part, by ordering an innocent perſon to be treated with ſuch barbarity. We ſhall here make the following obſervations.

1. That the Saviour of the world was exhibited as a ſpectacle to his people, ought alſo to be conſidered as a part of his meritorious ſufferings.

The Lord Jeſus ſtood here full of pains and wounds, and ſeemed outwardly to be in ſo

(*g*) Iſaiah liii. 2.

dreadful

dreadful a condition, that he looked more like a deſpicable worm than a man. Hence the Meſſiah, in the Pſalms (*b*), as it were contradicts theſe words of his judge, Behold the man, ſaying, 'I am a worm, and no 'man; a reproach of men, and deſpiſed of 'the people. All they that ſee me laugh 'me to ſcorn; they ſhoot out the lip, they 'ſhake the head.' But inwardly his ſoul was lifted up in continual prayers and ejaculations to his Father; before whom he here preſented himſelf covered with blood and ſtripes, in order to move his paternal tenderneſs to a reconciliation with us. His afflicted ſoul cried out much louder to his heavenly Father, than Pilate did to the people, Behold the man! the man who ſuffers himſelf to be thus inhumanly treated for men; and has taken upon him the puniſhment which they deſerved, that they may obtain thy pardon. Father, forgive them the debts which they have contracted, and in acquittance of them, accept of the blood which ſtreams from my lacerated body! Here I ſtand, O my Father! proceed to diſcharge at me the keen arrows of thy diſpleaſure: I am ready to preſent myſelf as the mark to be ſhot at. Is it thy pleaſure that I ſhould ſtill ſuffer more? Righteous Father, I moſt willingly and from my heart ſubmit, to bear all thy chaſtiſements. Only ſpeak the word, and whatever thou commandeſt, that will I do. Theſe or

(*b*) Pſalm xxii. 7, 8.

ſuch like thoughts employed our bleſſed Saviour's ſerene mind at this juncture. At the ſame time, his heart was full of filial confidence in his heavenly Father, being thoroughly perſuaded that he would deliver him from this hour of ignominy and reproach; that he would exhalt him to the higheſt honour, and preſent him to be adored by all the heavenly hoſt.

Behold, to what a low condition the Creator of all worlds was brought by our ſins! It was on us his ſinful creatures that the ſentence ſhould have been executed, according to that of the Prophet: 'The men that have 'tranſgreſſed againſt me ſhall be an abhorring 'unto all fleſh (*i*)' The Son of God, on the contrary, was here made an abhorring unto all fleſh. Oh, what an abomination muſt ſin be in the eyes of God, ſince it rendered the Son of God, manifeſted in the fleſh, a laughing-ſtock and an abhorrence to the people!

But, at the ſame time, this affords an inexpreſſible comfort to the faithful ſervants of God, when in this afflictive circumſtance they are made like unto the Son of God, the firſt born among many brethren, and can ſay with St. Paul, 'We are made a ſpectacle unto the world (*k*);' or, as the ſame Apoſtle ſays of the Hebrew converts (*l*), when 'they are made a gazing-ſtock 'both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly 'whilſt they become companions of them

(*i*) Iſaiah lxvi. 24. (*k*) 1 Cor. iv. 9.
(*l*) Heb. x. 33.

'that are ſo uſed.' For as the Lord of Glory was here ridiculed, and made a gazing-ſtock to his people, the like opprobrious honour is likewiſe to be the portion of his faithful followers. How often have the primitive martyrs been made uſe of as torches for the nocturnal ſpectacles of the Heathens; who wrapped them in paper or linen garments done over with roſin, pitch, and other combuſtibles, and then ſet them on fire and burnt them alive! How often were they expoſed naked to crowds of inſulting ſpectators, by whom they were mocked, abuſed, and reviled! How often at the public games, were they made to fight with wild beaſts, *&c. &c.* Therefore it might well be ſaid, 'Behold the man!' What an unſpeakable comfort and encouragement muſt it have been to thoſe ſuffering members of Chriſt, to reflect, that their glorious Head was alſo made a gazing-ſtock to the people. It has alſo been a common practice in the Popiſh perſecutions, to expoſe the martyrs who ſuffered for the truth of the Goſpel to the inſulting populace in the moſt ridiculous dreſs, in order to move their laughter and contempt. Thus when the bleſſed martyr John Huſs was carried to be burnt, a paper crown painted all over with frightful figures of devils was put on his head; which, however, ſerved to remind him of his Saviour's mock-crown of thorns, and ſo far proved a comfort to him. All theſe various ſufferings of the martyrs for the truth,

the

the Lord Jeſus ſanctified, by thus becoming a gazing ſtock to the Jews.

2. No ſight is ſo profitable to the eye of the ſoul, as that of the bleſſed Jeſus thus covered with blood and ſtripes.

To the eyes of vain men, indeed, this is an image of diſguſt and horror. They ſee nothing in it which can give the leaſt comfort to them. It is ſomething extraordinary, if the contemplation of it raiſe in them ſome motions of a mere natural pity, which ſoon vaniſh away without leaving any impreſſion on the mind. But when a pious Chriſtian, through the medium of true faith, beholds his Mediator, as it were, changed into a worm; he, like the diſeaſed Iſraelites, who looked on the brazen ſerpent, is healed by the ſight, and his whole heart is mollified and changed.

Thus the counſel of God was manifeſted in theſe words of Pilate, 'Behold the man!' For as in the whole hiſtory of the paſſion, we are to turn our eyes from the hands of men, and to look up to the decrees of God; ſo muſt we do in this particular. Pilate was now in the ſame caſe as Caiaphas the High Prieſt was, when he ſpoke thoſe remarkable words mentioned by St. John (*n*), of which we have taken notice above *. Therefore as the bleſſed Jeſus here through Pilate's means, expoſed himſelf covered with blood to his people, or rather to the whole world; ſo likewiſe the words, 'Behold

(*n*) Chap. xi. 51. * See Vol. I. p. 230.

'the

'the man', muſt be looked upon by us as if ſpoken by Chriſt himſelf *.

Therefore, ye impenitent ſinners, who ſtill place your ſatisfaction and delight in ſin, Behold the man! Do you obſerve how ſin has cauſed your Redeemer to be thus barbarouſly treated? Here you may ſee, as in a faithful mirror, how it will go with you, unleſs you ſincerely forſake your ſins, and believe in Chriſt. If you die in your ſins; in ſuch reproach and diſgrace, crowned with the thorns of the curſe, and ſtigmatiſed with the marks of everlaſting death, will ye one day be expoſed before God and his elect Angels. Behold, from this eternal ignominy will your Saviour deliver you, but on no other conditions than thoſe of faith in him, ſincere repentance and amendment of life. You muſt truly turn to God, acknowledging yourſelves deſerving of the greateſt diſgrace and reproach, and preſent yourſelves before the Throne of Grace as wretched criminals, who are guilty of death. O neglect not this oppportunity until Jeſus, who now, as it were, ſtands before your eyes as a deſpiſed worm, ſhall ſeat himſelf on his judgment-ſeat, and pronounce ſentence of eternal condemnation on thoſe who have deſpiſed the merits of his blood! Therefore with eyes full of tears, and with looks of paſſionate longing after mercy, Behold the man,

* Et fuerunt ſanè, qui verba ἰδὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος non ex ore Pilati, ſed ex ore Chriſti profecta putant, ut ADR. *de* KRUISKERKEN *de flagellatione Chriſti*, p. 44; ſed parùm probabiliter.

whom

whom your ſins have thus barbarouſly treated! Pray to him, who for yourſake became, as it were, a worm, and leſs than man, and implore his protection to deliver you from that ruin and depravity into which you are ſunk, and to make you the ſons of God and heirs of Glory.

Behold, ye covetous and mercileſs rich men, Behold the man, who is thus debaſed and poor, in order to make many rich; who is ſo emaciated that you may tell all his bones; who out of his generous love and boundleſs liberality, poured out his precious blood for your ſalvation.

Ye ſons of Pride and Ambition, Behold the man, who is humbled ſo low; whoſe head is crowned with thorns, and whoſe body is expoſed in a tattered purple robe, for your ſins.

Ye wanton and laſcivious, Behold the man, whoſe whole body was covered with blood, ſtripes, and bruiſes. Behold, with what torture he was to ſatisfy the Divine Juſtice for your ſenſuality, voluptuouſneſs, and the luſts of your pampered fleſh.

Ye Paſſionate and Revengeful, Behold the man, who ſuffers whatever Heaven is pleaſed to lay upon him with aſtoniſhing patience, mildneſs, and ſerenity; who permits himſelf to be aſſaulted by the combined rage of a tumultuous populace, that he might atone for your violent emotions of anger and revenge, and obtain pardon and grace for you from his heavenly Father. Therefore, throw yourſelves at

the

the feet of this incarnate God; pour out your tears and complaints before him; and pray to him that his ſufferings may be for the ſalvation of your ſouls.

Laſtly, Ye Penitent and Faithful ſouls, Behold the man! See how low his unſpeakable love to you brought him! Turn your eyes from your ſins and iniquities, with which your conſcience is oppreſſed, and direct them to this Lamb of God, the ſacred Victim that has borne your ſins, and preſented himſelf to the Divine Juſtice as a great Sacrifice of Atonement. Contemplate his whole deplorable appearance, by which he has removed the ghaſtly appearance of your guilt, when you were an abhorrence in the ſight of God and in your own eyes, and has made you acceptable to the Father. Reflect on his ignominious crown of thorns, by which he has acquired for you a right to a never-fading crown of Glory. Conſider his mean purple robe, by which he has obtained for you the garment of innocence and righteouſneſs. Contemplate his wounds and ſtripes as the remedy for the wounds of your conſcience. Behold his face covered with blood, but at the ſame time beaming forth looks of the moſt tender love to your ſouls. Laſtly, conſider his compoſed and placid heart, which, amidſt all his pains and the malicious outrages of his enemies, was lifted up in prayer to God. Therefore with a cordial love, and with all the powers of the ſoul, give yourſelves up to this faithful Saviour; and as he voluntarily

ſuffered

ſuffered himſelf to be expoſed to cruelty and rage, ſo likewiſe do you willingly preſent and devote yourſelves to his ſervice. Do not heſitate to become an inſulting laughing-ſtock in following Chriſt. If the world points at you, if it inſults and ridicules you, rejoice that you are made thus conformable to the ſuffering Jeſus; and be aſſured, that he will one day preſent you to the Father in a glorious ſtate, when he himſelf ſhall point you out and ſay, 'Behold, 'here am I, and the children whom thou 'gaveſt me (*o*).'

II.

Let us now, in the next place, conſider the effect produced by the means which Pilate made uſe of to releaſe our bleſſed Saviour, and enquire what followed his being thus exhibited to the people.

Firſt, It was followed by a tumultuous outcry. For 'when the chief Prieſts and Officers 'ſaw him, they cried out, ſaying, Crucify 'him! Crucify him!' The people ſeemed, at firſt, to have felt ſome compaſſion at the deplorable appearance of the bleſſed Jeſus; inſomuch that they ſtood in a ſilent aſtoniſhment at the diſmal ſpectacle. But the chief Prieſts and their officers, who, for their own intereſt, were obliged to join in the cry, and to gnaſh upon this innocent perſon with their teeth (*p*), were too

(*o*) Iſaiah viii. 18. Heb. ii. 13. (*p*) Pſ. xxxv. 16.

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malignant and cruel to be ſuſceptible of any pity or compaſſion. They were not ſenſible that mercy is better than ſacrifice (*q*), Here were verified theſe words of the Pſalmiſt (*r*). 'Many 'bulls have compaſſed me; ſtrong bulls of 'Baſhan have beſet me round. They gaped 'upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and 'a roaring lion.' Here was accompliſhed what the Lord Jeſus had, in a parable, before declared to this perverſe generation, ſaying, 'When the huſbandmen ſaw the Son, they 'ſaid among themſelves, This is the heir; 'Come, let us kill him (*ſ*).' The accompliſhment of it was this: 'When the chief 'Prieſts ſaw him, they cried out, ſaying, Cru-'cify him!'

Thus the ſight of this moving ſpectacle had quite a different effect on them from what Pilate had imagined. He hoped by ſo deplorable an object, to have moved them to compaſſion; but on the contrary, at the ſight of the blood iſſuing from all parts of our Saviour's body, their thirſt after his blood was the more inflamed. Here Solomon's aſſertion was abundantly verified, namely, 'The tender mercies 'of the wicked are cruel (*t*).' No leſs ſavage are the men of this world in their rage againſt the faithful ſervants of Chriſt, who bear witneſs to the truth. The ſympathetic feelings of humanity are turned into the moſt ſavage bar-

(*q*) Matth. ix. 13. xii. 7.
(*r*) Pſ. xxii. 12, 13.
(*ſ*) Matth. xxi. 38.
(*t*) Prov. xii. 10.

barity,

barity, by their hatred to Chriſt and his members. How muſt theſe outrageous clamours of the mad populace have affected the ſoul of the bleſſed Jeſus! The wounds and ſtripes inflicted on him by the ſoldiers, did not cauſe him near ſo much pain as this inhuman rancour of his people.

But the ſame barbarous treatment which our bleſſed Lord here experienced, has been continued to his members. When the Aſiatic Jews ſaw St. Paul in the Temple, 'they ſtirred up all 'the people, and laid hands on him, crying 'out, Men of Iſrael help.——And all the city 'was moved, and the people came together. '——And as they went about to kill him, 'tidings came to the chief Captain of the Band, 'that all Jeruſalem was in an uproar (*u*)'. And when St. Paul had thereupon made his defence, the whole multitude 'lift up their voices, and 'ſaid, Away with ſuch a fellow from the earth! 'for it is not fit he ſhould live. And as they 'cried out, and caſt off their clothes, and 'threw duſt into the air, the chief Cap-'tain commanded him to be brought into the 'Caſtle (*x*).' The hiſtories of the martyrs particularly prove that the Romiſh clergy never ſhewed themſelves more outrageous than when they had Chriſt ſuffering before their eyes, in the perſons of his members and faithful witneſſes. Even thieves and robbers meet with ſome compaſſion, when they are puniſhed ſo

(*u*) Acts xxi. 27——31. (*x*) Acts xxii. 23, 24.

their

their offences; but when Chriſt in his members is tortured by fire or ſword, they ſteel their breaſts againſt all ſentiments of pity and tenderneſs *.

But alas! it little becomes ſinners to rail againſt the enemies of Chriſt. The malignant ſpirit of Cain, which naturally dwells in us, cried through the Jewiſh people, Crucify him! Nay, what the deluded Jews did is daily repeated. All thoſe who are not moved by the pains of a ſuffering Saviour, to renounce their ungodly ways, and fly from thoſe ſins which brought ſuch ſufferings upon him, do, in effect, cry out, Crucify him! Crucify him!

O bleſſed Jeſus! grant, that the conſideration of thy manifold ſufferings may have a nobler effect on our ſouls! Grant that we may cry out againſt our old man, Crucify him! Crucify him! and that we may do homage to thee as our lawful King. May every inſult, and every pain which thou didſt endure for our ſake, inſpire us with freſh motives to obedience, and gratitude for thy ſtupendous love.

Secondly, The next thing which happened after our Saviour was thus exhibited as a deplorable ſpectacle to the people, was Pilate's expoſtulation with the Jews; in which occurs

* It is obſerved of the Portugueze, that they are extremely concerned when robbers or murderers are executed for their crimes; but at the *Auto de Fe*, when pretended heretics are burnt, they do not ſhew the leaſt pity or compaſſion to the unhappy victims of their bigotted rage. *W.*

1. Pilate's ſpeech to them. Pilate, it ſeems grew ſo impatient at this laſt outcry of the Jews, that he broke out into theſe paſſionate expreſſions, 'Take ye him, and crucify him; for I 'find no fault him.' In this he was ſo far to be commended, that he again publicly repeats his teſtimony of our bleſſed Lord's innocence. But, on the other hand, he is to be blamed for not oppoſing the Jews, who were for aſſuming the power of crucifying an innocent perſon, and for taking the guilt of it on themſelves; at leaſt, he might have declined giving them a permiſſion amounting to an expreſs command. Pilate had before taken Jeſus and ſcourged him (*x*); and now he is willing to permit others to take him away, and crucify him. How cruel is his mercy! What did it avail Pilate, that he was convinced of our Saviour's innocence? To what purpoſe did he now cry out a third time, 'I find no fault in him (*y*)', ſince he acted contrary to ſuch a conviction? Thus, it will be of no benefit to us, to cry out, O Lamb of God that takeſt away the ſins of the world; unleſs we forſake our ſins, in humility lay hold on Chriſt's innocence, and ſuffer his Spirit to guide us, that we may ſerve him in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our lives? Preſerve us, O Lord, from all ſuch ſcandalous hypocriſy, that we may not confeſs thy innocence with our mouth; and yet crucify thee by our manifold ſins and impieties, or

(*x*) John xix. 1. (*y*) See John xviii. 38. xix. 4 and 6.

with-

without concern ſee thee taken away and crucified by others. This expoſtulation of Pilate was followed

2. By the anſwer of the Jews, which was this: 'We have a Law, and by our Law he 'ought to die.' Hitherto, the accuſation of the Jews againſt our bleſſed Saviour had turned chiefly on crimes againſt the civil Government. They had charged him with forbidding the people to pay tribute to Cæſar, and making himſelf a King. The former crime was detrimental to the Emperor's treaſury, as it tended to leſſen his revenue, and the latter was high treaſon againſt his Imperial Majeſty; and both were equally puniſhable with death. But Pilate, finding in the Priſoner's confeſſion no grounds for ſuch an indictment, had, time after time, declared him innocent. The Jews therefore drop thoſe points at preſent, and return to the charge with a new complaint of a different nature; which could not properly come under the cognizance of Pilate. By this proceeding they expoſed the greateſt myſtery of their religion, and debaſed it in the eyes of the civil Judge, who was a Heathen, and underſtood nothing of it. But rage and malice prompted them to treſpaſs on what was ſacred; for they little regarded how much it might be profaned before Pilate's Tribunal. So much pains did theſe ſons of malice and cruelty take to render Chriſt, the great Author of Salvation, the cauſe of condemnation to themſelves.

The Jews, in anſwer to Pilate's expoſtulation, appealed to the Law, and ſaid, 'We 'have a Law, and by that Law he ought to 'die.' They had indeed a Law, which condemned blaſphemers and falſe prophets to be puniſhed with death (*z*). But this Law was moſt wrongfully applied to Chriſt, who had always highly honoured his Father. That Divine Law, in which they ought to have diſcerned their wickedneſs, they uſed as a covering for their villainy. Theſe very accuſers of the Lord Jeſus were the greateſt tranſgreſſors of the Divine Law (*a*). But when they were reſolved at any rate to put Jeſus to death, they made uſe of the Law as a pretence to palliate their cruelty; and though they themſelves impiouſly trampled the Law under foot, yet they would fain have Chriſt executed as a tranſgreſſor of it.

How amazing and dreadful is the reflection, that the great Angel of the Covenant, who himſelf gave the Law on Mount Sinai, ſhould here be accuſed as a Tranſgreſſor of the Law! We, alas! had tranſgreſſed the Divine Law, and by that Law were to die. But, behold, he cometh in our ſtead, who could ſay, 'Thy Law, 'O my God, is within my heart *(b)*'; and permits the prieſts and people to cry out againſt him, 'by our Law he ought to die.' The bleſſed Jeſus thus ſuffers himſelf to be con-

(*z*) Lev. xxiv. 15, 16. Deut. xviii. 20. Rom. ii. 23. (*a*) John vii. 19. (*b*) Pſ. xl. 8.

demned

demned by the Law, that we may be acquitted by the Goſpel. Stupendous love! immeaſurable kindneſs!

At the ſame time, our bleſſed Lord has hereby ſanctified the ſufferings of his faithful ſervants, who frequently are declared Heretics, and puniſhed with death, through falſe interpretations of Scripture by illiterate zealots. It is no ſmall aggravation of the ſufferings of Chriſtians, when they are condemned by declarations out of the word of God wreſted from their true meaning, by an iniquitous ſet of unmerciful judges. However, by the pretended condemnation of the Son of God, according to the ſentence of the Law, the ſting of ſuch an offence is taken away. Alas! Chriſt is daily crucified even among Chriſtians, by thoſe who have the Scripture in their mouth, and quote it like Satan in the Goſpel *(c)*; and yet make it a covering to their vices and wickedneſs, by picking out of it every thing they can to excuſe and palliate their ſinful actions, and, as it were, to make pillows on which their carnal ſecurity may repoſe itſelf.

But let us enquire, what particular Law that was, by which the Law-giver himſelf was here adjudged to die? He has, ſay the Jews, made himſelf the Son of God. By their former accuſation of ſetting up for a King, he had been arraigned for high treaſon againſt Cæſar; but by this charge they make him guilty of high treaſon againſt the Divine Majeſty. Thus they repreſent

(*c*) Matth. iv. 6.

Jeſus as one, who not only exalted himſelf above the head of the Roman Empire, but above all created beings, and made himſelf equal with God. Conſequently they make him guilty of death on a double account, namely, by the Roman Laws, as a rebel, and by the Jewiſh Law, as a blaſphemer.

Alas! deluded mortals, it was not our bleſſed Saviour that made himſelf the Son of God, but He who ſaid unto him, 'Thou art my Son 'this day have I begotten thee (*d*);' and who at the ſame time enjoined all 'the kings and 'judges of the earth to kiſs, or worſhip, his 'Son.' We had arrogated an equality with God, for which here the real Son of God was to atone. In the ſtate of Innocence, we were the beloved children of God; but inſtead of reſting ſatisfied with this honour, we would be as gods *(e)*. On the contrary, by the attempt, we became like unto our ſeducer the devil, and fell under the ſentence of temporal and eternal death.

(*d*) Pſ. ii. 7. Heb. v. 5. (*e*) Gen. iii. 5.

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THE PRAYER.

THANKS be to thee, O bleſſed Jeſus, for thine unſpeakable love, which moved thee to debaſe thyſelf ſo low, and to permit ſuch a falſe accuſation to be brought againſt thee, as that thou madeſt thyſelf the Son of God; by which thou didſt obtain for us the glorious privilege of being ſons and daughters of the Almighty. Bleſs that part of the Divine Word, which we have now conſidered. Grant that the contemplation of the mournful ſpectacle, exhibited to the people after thy painful ſcourging, may powerfully move the hearts of all thoſe who, in their carnal ſecurity, are going forward in treſpaſſes without any dread of the Divine wrath, and impreſs on them a deep ſenſe of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin. Grant that it may likewiſe become a comfort to all penitent and faithful Chriſtians; and in all temptations to ſin, put us again in mind of that part of thy ſufferings, which we have now viewed as it were at a diſtance, that we may be powerfully reſtrained from yielding to them. Remind us more particularly of theſe thy ſufferings at the tremendous hour of death, that we may thence derive comfort and confidence to recommend our ſouls to thee, our merciful Saviour, and die in thy faith. Grant this for the ſake of thy name. Amen.

CONSIDERATION XIV.

Pilate's *laſt diſcourſe with the* LORD JESUS.

'(*a*) WHEN Pilate therefore heard that
' ſaying, he was the more afraid;
' and he went again into the Judgment-hall,
' and ſaith unto Jeſus, Whence art thou? But
' Jeſus gave him no anſwer. Then ſaith Pilate
' unto him, Speakeſt thou not unto me?
' Knoweſt thou not, that I have power to cru-
' cify thee, and have power to releaſe thee?
' Jeſus anſwered, Thou couldeſt have no power
' at all againſt me, except it were given thee from
' above: Therefore, he that delivered me unto
' thee hath the greater ſin.'

In theſe laſt words which Pilate ſpoke to the Lord Jeſus we may obſerve,

Firſt, The occaſion of this diſcourſe: 'When Pilate therefore heard that ſaying, he 'was the more afraid, and went again into the 'judgment-hall.' The chief Prieſts, being diſappointed in their firſt accuſation, now brought a new article againſt the priſoner, and accuſed Jeſus, ſaying, That he made himſelf the Son of God; and that conſequently, according to their Law, by which they were governed under the protection of the Romans, he ought to die. This new charge occaſioned uncommon

(*a*) John xix. 8——11.

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emotions in the mind of the Roman Judge. For it was the belief of both Romans and Greeks, that there were a multitude of gods and goddeſſes, who propagated their race, and begot children; who ſometimes uſed in a viſible ſhape to come down from heaven, and converſe with men. Thus the Heathens at Lyſtra took Paul and Barnabas for ſuch deities, and cried out, The gods are come down unto us, in the likeneſs of men *(b)*. When Pilate heard that Jeſus made himſelf the Son of God, he concluded, that if he was the offspring of the immortal gods, ſome dreadful vengeance would fall on him and his family. For he had already cauſed this Divine perſon to be ſcourged, and permitted his ſoldiers to inſult him with all manner of indignities, and illegal abuſes. His conſcience now reproached him for what he had done, and excited in him that ſervile fear of which the Evangeliſt takes notice above.

But by the words, 'he was the more afraid,' it appears that he had been very uneaſy during the whole proceedings againſt Jeſus, and that he had before been agitated with fear and terror, which he could not account for. For, notwithſtanding all the meanneſs and ignominy which then ſurrounded the Lord Jeſus, ſome majeſtic rays of his concealed glory beamed forth from him, and made ſuch an impreſſion on Pilate that he could not but conclude, that the perſon who now ſtood before his Tribunal

(b) Acts xiv. 11, 12.

was

was ſomething more than human. He had before been ſtruck with our bleſſed Lord's magnanimous ſilence; but now he was quite diſturbed, when he heard that he had to do with the Son of God; and at the ſame time recollected, that he had heard of many ſurprizing miracles which had been wrought by this Jeſus.

Something like this has often happened to other Pagan judges, in the perſecutions of the members of Chriſt. They have been made ſenſible that Chriſtians are quite of a different ſpirit from other malefactors. They have been thrown into fear and conſternation, and have felt violent emotions at the undaunted appearance, and noble behaviour of martyrs and confeſſors. This ſervile fear, which often, though not always, appears in unjuſt judges, who condemn the innocent witneſſes of the truth, ſerves as a teſtimony of the majeſty and veneration which true religion carries along with it; ſince it ſtrikes unbelievers with awe and terror.

Secondly, We may obſerve the queſtion put by Pilate to the Lord Jeſus. Pilate went again into the judgment-hall, that he might ſpeak with Jeſus apart and free from all noiſe and interruption, and ſaid unto him, 'Whence 'art thou?' He does not by theſe words enquire after his earthly country, namely, whether he was of Judea, or Galilee? For he could not but conclude from the former accuſations of the Jews, that he was of Galilee, ſince

ſince he had, on that account, ſent him to Herod, under whoſe government that province was. But by this queſtion, Pilate's deſign was to inform himſelf of our Saviour's lineage and deſcent, *viz.* whether he was of Divine or Human extraction? and if the former was true, from what branch or family of the Gods he was deſcended? This queſtion aroſe chiefly from a vain curioſity. Beſides, he wanted to be rightly informed of this, in order to get rid of his ſervile fear, which now began greatly to diſturb his mind, and was ſtill growing on him; ſo that it is little to be wondered at, that Pilate did not receive any anſwer from the bleſſed Jeſus. The next particular which here deſerves our notice, was,

Thirdly, The ſilence of our bleſſed Lord. 'But Jeſus, ſaith the Evangeliſt, gave him no 'anſwer.' It is obſervable that, from the hiſtory of the Paſſion, we find, that the nearer the Lord Jeſus approached to his death, the leſs he converſed with men. However, he had his particular reaſons for not entering into diſcourſe with Pilate on this head.

For 1. It was a queſtion quite foreign to the purpoſe, and did not properly belong to any court of human judicature.

2. This queſtion put by Pilate did not proceed from a ſincere love of truth, nor from a deſire of knowing it; but from a mixture of curioſity and fear.

3. As

3. As Pilate, inſtead of regarding the anſwer which Jeſus had made to his former queſtion, *viz.* 'Art thou the King of the Jews,' had left him abruptly, and in a contemptuous manner had aſked, What was truth; he did not deſerve any further information.

4. This judgment on Pilate was, however, accompanied with ſome indulgence. Our bleſſed Lord well knew, that his eternal generation from the Father was far beyond Pilate's comprehenſion: He therefore ſaw, that it would only occaſion him to ſin further by inſolently ridiculing that ſacred truth, and by that means would aggravate his guilt, already very great. Hence the benevolent Jeſus, by his ſilence, prevented this increaſe of Pilate's condemnation.

5. Chriſt likewiſe confirmed his former command againſt giving ſacred things to dogs, or throwing pearls before ſwine (*c*), by his ſilence on this occaſion. Though wiſdom be found of thoſe that ſeek her, ſhe is not to be allured or acquired by queſtions of mere curioſity. On the contrary, ſhe turns aſide from the frivolous, the ſelf-ſufficient, and the licentious. After this ſilence of the Lord Jeſus follows,

Fourthly, A freſh expoſtulation of Pilate with our bleſſed Lord. This juſt and diſcreet ſilence of Chriſt gave offence to Pilate, who conſtrued it as a contempt of his dignity: Accordingly he ſays to Jeſus, 'Speakeſt thou not unto me?'

(*c*) Matt. vii. 6.

Thus

Thus he reproves him for not thinking him worthy of an anſwer, and adds, ‘ Knoweſt ‘ thou not that I have a power to crucify thee, ‘ and have power to releaſe thee?’ by which he gives him to underſtand that ſuch behaviour at this criſis was contrary to all the rules of prudence. He hints to Jeſus, that if he had a mind to be thought a ſon of God, he ſhould ſhew himſelf a maſter of ſo much ſenſe as to know that, inſtead of obſtinately irritating his judge, he ought to endeavour to gain him over to his intereſt by humility and diſcretion. Thus Pilate vainly boaſts of his power, notwithſtanding the ſervile fear which ſat ſo uneaſy on his heart. He effects an air of grandeur, the better to conceal his inward trouble. He, on the contrary, ought to have exerted his power over the Jews, towards whom he behaves with a ſcandalous timerouſneſs, and meanly complies with their unreaſonable demands. But in this, he acted after the manner of all the unjuſt magiſtrates of this world. When perſecuted defenceleſs Chriſtians are brought before them, they affect a great deal of ſtate and grandeur, and boaſt of their extenſive power and authority. Every petty judge then becomes a mighty Potentate. But when they are called upon to exert their power in ſuccouring the diſtreſſed, and protecting the innocent, againſt their potent oppreſſors, they are very ſilent on this head. Let us now conſider,

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Chriſt's anſwer to Pilate's laſt expoſtulation. As Pilate here encroached on the prerogative of heaven by vainly boaſting of a power, which was not his own, but was intruſted to him by God, to whom he was accountable for it; the bleſſed Jeſus found himſelf obliged by an inward impulſe, to vindicate the honour of his Father by a ſhort anſwer. He therefore addreſſes Pilate in theſe words: 'Thou couldeſt have no power at all againſt 'me, except it were given thee from above: 'Therefore he that delivered me unto thee 'hath the greater ſin.' In this anſwer of our bleſſed Lord we may remark the following particulars.

1. He grants that Pilate, in quality of a judge, was inveſted with power and authority, but at the ſame time gives him to underſtand, that he derives his power from God; ſo that, conſequently, he ought not to act arbitrarily, but, inſtead of conſulting only his own pleaſure, to uſe the power which he had received from above according to the pleaſure and precepts of God. If he acted otherwiſe, the account he was to give would be very grievous. Thus our bleſſed Lord here confirms the truth, which was afterwards inculcated by St. Paul in theſe words: 'There is no power but of God: 'the powers that be are ordained of God (*d*).'

2. He acquaints Pilate, that his power in the ordinary courſe of things did not properly ex-

(*d*) Rom. xiii. 1.

tend

tend over his perſon; for he ſays, 'Thou 'couldeſt have no power over ME.' All the Jews, indeed, who then lived in Paleſtine were under the dominion of the Roman Emperor, and conſequently were ſubject to Pilate, as his deputy. The Lord Jeſus therefore, by excepting himſelf alone from Pilate's juriſdiction, gives him to underſtand, that he is not to look upon him as another common Jew. For though Chriſt, according to the fleſh, was deſcended from the Jewiſh Patriarchs; yet, at the ſame time, he was 'over all, God bleſſed 'for evermore (*e*).' In taking upon him the form of a ſervant, he indeed 'ſubmitted 'himſelf to every ordinance of man for the 'Lord's ſake;' but according to his Divine nature, he was the Lord and Creator not only of Pilate, but of the Roman Emperor himſelf. In conſequence of this, Pilate was ſo far from having any power over him, that he had a full and abſolute power over Pilate; and of this he then gave a remarkable proof; for his preſence filled Pilate's heart with fear and conſternation. This was contrary to the uſual courſe of things: for the priſoner on ſuch occaſions generally dreads, and trembles before, his judge; whereas the reverſe happened here, for the judge is terrified and ſtruck with awe at the preſence of the priſoner.

3. Our bleſſed Lord informs Pilate from whence the extraordinary power, which he

(*e*) Rom. ix. 5.

now

now had over his body, was derived. 'Thou 'couldeſt have no power at all againſt me, ſaith 'the Lord Jeſus, unleſs it were given thee from 'above,' *i. e.* from God: For, as St. James obſerves (*f*), 'Every good gift and perfect gift is 'from above, and cometh down from the Fa-'ther of lights.' Thus the deſign of our bleſſed Saviour by this expreſſion, is to refer Pilate to the counſel of God; and to direct his thoughts to a higher hand, by which he was brought to the painful death which now approached. For God from the foundation of the world, had determined that his Son ſhould take the human nature upon him, and die a violent and bloody death, as an atonement for the ſins of the world. Inſtead of immediately executing this ſentence on our Mediator, God was pleaſed to commit the execution of it to the ſword of the magiſtrate; whom he has inveſted with power to puniſh thoſe malefactors with death, who have forfeited their lives by their crimes, and againſt whom the Word of God has denounced ſentence of death. As Pilate at that time bore the ſword of juſtice in Judea *, God, in an extraordinary manner, permitted that it ſhould be uſed for executing that ſentence, which he had long ago paſſed

(*f*) Chap. i. 17.

* Procuratores enim Judaeæ *jus gladii* habuiſſe patet ex JOSEPHI *Antiqu.* Lib. XVIII. C. 1. *et de Bello Jud.* Lib. II. C. 2. Conf. Ven. SALOMONIS DEYLINGII *Obſervationes Sacras* Part II. p. 325. *et* Jo. JAC. WISSENBACHII *Notas Nomico-philolog. in Paſſionem Chriſti* ad Joh. xix. 10.

by

by an eternal decree on our Surety. But in this tranſaction, the work of God, and the proceedings of Pilate are carefully to be diſtinguiſhed. God, as the Supreme Judge of the world, made uſe of the judicial power of Pilate, in order to puniſh our ſins which were imputed to Chriſt. But in the injuſtice of Pilate, and his cruel behaviour towards Jeſus, God had no ſhare; nor did the Author of all good prompt him to thoſe unjuſt proceedings, which he was guilty of in this trial: On the contrary, they were the workings of his own corrupt heart fomented by the ſuggeſtions of Satan. Thus our bleſſed Lord acknowledges Pilate to be his judge; who indeed, according to the ordinary courſe of things, could have no power over him; but at this time, by an extraordinary diſpenſation of Providence, he had acquired power and authority over the Son of God.

4. Jeſus remonſtrates to Pilate, that he greatly ſinned by abuſing the civil power, which he had received from God. At the ſame time, our bleſſed Lord owns that the chief Prieſts and Scribes, by delivering him to Pilate, were guilty of the greater ſin, and had the more to anſwer for. Indeed they had before condemned him to die, and only wanted to employ the civil judge as the inſtrument to put their unjuſt ſentence in execution. The ſin which theſe men were guilty of was of a much deeper dye than that committed by Pilate on this occaſion;

ſince they ought to have known from the writings of the Prophets, who Jeſus was. Nay, they muſt have been convinced in their hearts, that he was come from God, and that no man could do thoſe miracles that Jeſus had done, except God was with him, as Nicodemus acknowledges in the name of them all (*g*). Jeſus therefore readily owns this, and by that means, as it were, cuts off Pilate's retreat; who would have laid the whole fault at the door of the Jews. Thus he ſaid before, 'Am I a Jew? thine 'own nation, and the chief Prieſts have deli-'vered thee unto me.'

Our bleſſed Lord does by no means exculpate Pilate, by making this acknowledgment *; on the contrary, his deſign is rather to work on his conſcience, and convince him of his heinous guilt. Pilate was very ſenſible that Jeſus was innocent, and that the chief Prieſts had delivered him purely out of envy and malice; yet he did great violence, and acted quite contrary, to this conviction. For he not only, as it were, ſtaked the life of this innocent Perſon againſt that of a notorious murderer, and cauſed him to be very inhumanly ſcourged; but permitted his ſoldiers to revile, inſult, and commit all manner of outrages againſt him. Notwithſtanding all this, Pilate could ſtill preſumptu-

(*g*) John iii. 2.

* Fruſtrà igitur in Pilato excuſando laborat Jo. STELLERUS in libello ſingulari, Dreſdæ 1674 edito, refutatus à KIRCHMAYERO in Diſſ. *de Pilato præſide*, 1680.

ouſly boaſt of his power, and inſult the bleſſed Jeſus, by ſaying, 'Knoweſt thou not that I 'have power to crucify thee, and have power to 'releaſe thee? This aſſertion at the ſame time implied a great abſurdity: For if Chriſt was innocent, Pilate had no legal power to order him to be crucified; and if, on the other hand, he was guilty, he had no right to releaſe him. But the righteous God did not leave this unjuſtice of Pilate unpuniſhed; for, on a complaint of the Samaritans againſt him, he was ſent priſoner to Rome by Vitellius; and was deprived of his poſt by the Emperor Caligula, and then baniſhed. At length, according to ſome hiſtorians, he put an end to his wretched life with his own hands in his exile *. Thus the Divine vengeance purſued this unjuſt Judge, and puniſhed him for the abuſe of his power in condemning the innocent Son of God. From this laſt diſcourſe of Pilate with our bleſſed Saviour, we may learn the following truths.

1. Servile fear and terror may, indeed, cauſe great emotions in the human heart, but can never work a thorough change and amendment of it.

Pilate, who naturally did not want courage and reſolution, was yet ſtruck with a ſecret

* Uti ex Romanis ſcriptioribus HIERONYMUS in *Chronico*, & ex Græcis Olypiadum ſcriptoribus refert EUSEBIUS *in Hiſt. Eccl.* Lib, II. C. 7. obſervante JAC. USSERIO, in *Annal.* p. 618. Alias de Pilato traditiones exhibet FABRICIUS in *Codice Apocrypho N. T.* Part III. p. 505.

fear by the rays of the Divinity which beamed forth in Jeſus Chriſt. He was greatly afraid when he underſtood, that he had proceeded ſo far againſt a perſon who affirmed that he was a ſon of God, and his conſcience forboded him no good for having ſuffered his ſoldiers to uſe Jeſus in ſo contemptuous and inhuman a manner. But Pilate was only actuated by a baſe and ſervile fear. He was not much concerned becauſe he had committed theſe acts of injuſtice and cruelty; but his fear proceeded from the apprehenſion, that the gods would not fail of puniſhing him in due time for the indignities he had offered to that Divine Perſon, who was the Son of a Deity. This ſervile fear had not in the leaſt cured the malignity of Pilate's heart; for we find all his natural pride breaking forth ſoon after, in theſe words: 'Speakeſt 'thou not unto me?'

However, Pilate by his fear on this occaſion may put thouſands of bold, licentious Chriſtians to the bluſh. This Heathen was afraid, becauſe he had ſuffered a Son of the gods to be ſcourged. But who among us is afraid, when he is informed by the Apoſtle that by his ſins he has, as it were, crucified the Son of God afreſh (*b*). But granting that it might occaſion in ſuch perſons a ſervile fear; yet this is not ſufficient to convert the heart. On the contrary, fatal experience ſhews that thoſe, whom a baſe and ſervile fear, as the firſt

(*b*) Heb. vi. 6.

fruits

fruits of repentance, had thrown into extreme dejection and agonies of mind, have generally on their recovery from ſuch a ſtate become more bold, licentious, and ſecure than they were before. But, if the ſinner lets this ſervile fear get the dominion over him, it will only lead him to deſpair. A ſinner who is accuſed by his own conſcience muſt at firſt be awakened by a ſervile fear; which cauſes him to be afraid of God as a righteous Judge, and of his temporal and eternal puniſhments. This fear, as it were, compels him to abſtain from many outward ſins. But this ſervile fear of the Divine Juſtice muſt afterwards be gradually purified, and refined into a filial awe and reverence, by the glorious Goſpel of God in Chriſt Jeſus; and muſt be tempered with the love of God, which alone mends the heart, and produces in it a willing propenſity to good.

Reflect all ye, who by the convictions of your conſciences are awakened to a ſervile fear, that you are yet advanced no farther than Pilate who was a Heathen; and that, if you break off here, or intend to proceed no farther in the work of converſion to God, you will be as little benefited by ſuch convictions of your guilt, as he was by his conviction of our Saviour's innocence: Come therefore to God by Chriſt, the Son of his love, who will fill your hearts with perfect love, which caſteth out ſlaviſh fear (*i*).

(*i*) 1 John iv. 18.

O faithful Saviour! do thou fill our hearts with a filial love and fear of God, that we may not only avoid the puniſhments due to ſin, but have an inward abhorrence of ſin itſelf; eſpecially as it brought ſo many ſufferings on thy ſacred Perſon, and cauſed thy death on the Croſs.

2. There are many in our days who reſemble Pilate; who out of vain curioſity are ſtarting queſtions on the ſublimeſt myſteries of religion, but at the ſame time ſhew a contempt of its fundamental truths.

Pilate, as we have obſerved above, had paid no regard to the confeſſion, which Chriſt had made before him concerning his kingdom; and had made a jeſt of that important Truth, which Chriſt came into the world to promulgate. But now he is for ſcaling the third heaven at once, and with his profane heatheniſh underſtanding, would fain penetrate into the moſt exalted myſtery of Faith, namely, the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. But how many are there, who in our days preſumptuouſly diſpute and pretend to explain the myſteries of religion, before they know the firſt elements of Chriſtianity, and while they are ſlaves to their luſts and paſſions. Young ſtudents in Divinity, by the conceit they entertain of their proud reaſon, are moſt in danger of this preſumption. But too many of thoſe, who vainly diſpute about theſe awful myſteries of our religion, are but babes in the practice of Chriſtianity;

tianity; are ſtrangers to repentance, ſelf-denial, taking up the croſs, and carrying it after Chriſt; and indeed, to learn and practice ſuch things is generally the leaſt of their deſires. God reveals his ſecrets, as far as it concerns us to know, to babes and to the humble, but not to thoſe proud ſpirits who are for unfolding every thing by the natural dint of their genius, and arrogantly ſoar above the native ſimplicity of God's Word.

Bleſſed Jeſus! preſerve us from all preſumption and vain curioſity in ſpiritual things. Grant that we may know ourſelves, and from whence we are, namely, of ſinful origin, before we take upon us preſumptuouſly to explain thy myſterious generation, and ſay, Whence art thou? Let us firſt examine our own ſinful genealogy, before we preſume to trace that of Heaven. May we rather, after the example of thine elect Angels, as often as we look into the myſteries of thy ſacred perſon and office, bow down our heads in token of our devout humility and reverence.

3. The wiſdom of ſpeaking and being ſilent at proper ſeaſons, muſt be learned in the ſchool of Chriſt.

Here we find remarkable inſtances of both. Here our wiſe Redeemer gave ſufficient proof that he knew when to ſpeak, and when to be ſilent. This comſummate wiſdom no man is naturally poſſeſſed of. The natural man often ſpeaks when he ſhould be ſilent, and is ſilent

when he ſhould open his mouth. He ſpeaks whenever his own honour is called in queſtion, and launches out into diffuſe apologies; on the other hand, he has not a word to ſay when he ſhould ſtand up for God's honour, and vindicate the character of his neighbour when he is wrongfully accuſed. But this wiſe leſſon of ſpeaking and being ſilent on proper occaſions, is to be learned only in the ſchool of our crucified Saviour. For the inordinate deſires of the heart are crucified on the croſs of Chriſt, and are thus brought into due order; whereas they would otherwiſe extend their dominion over the tongue, and make it ſpeak or be ſilent, juſt as the intereſts of ſelf-love required. On the other hand, by the grace imparted to us by Jeſus Chriſt, we acquire an undaunted freedom to open our mouths and ſpeak boldly, when the honour of God, and the good of our neighbour require it; though we foreſee at the ſame time, that it will draw hatred and contempt upon us.

Teach us, O bleſſed Jeſus, that great wiſdom which no human ſkill can acquire. Keep the door of our lips, that we may learn to be ſilent when thy honour will not be promoted by our ſpeaking. On the other hand, open thou our mouths by thy ſecret Ephatha, when we are called upon to defend thy honour, and bear witneſs to the truth.

4. He, that knows the danger of being entruſted with worldy power and authority, will not

not boaſt of ſuch power when he is poſſeſſed of it; nor will he too eagerly deſire it, if he has it not.

Probably, Pilate would have leſs to anſwer for in the great Day of account, if his power in the days of his life had been leſs extenſive. This will alſo be the unhappy caſe of many others. As carnal men abuſe all the precious gifts of Heaven; as they employ their riches in riot and exceſs, and dedicate their beauty to voluptuouſneſs, their learning and parts to wicked devices; ſo do they generally abuſe the power which God has committed to their care, in their reſpective offices. How few, alas, know how to make a right uſe of it! how many convert it into an inſtrument of deſtruction to themſelves and others! That officer, who has but fifty or a hundred men under his command, immediately fancies that he may do with them as he pleaſes; that he may treat them with the utmoſt haughtineſs and cruelty; and that none of them muſt dare to open his mouth againſt his arbitrary proceedings. But, alas, how wretchedly do theſe men deceive themſelves! Men in power ſhould conſider, that they are partakers of the ſame common humanity with thoſe whom they command; that they have naturally no ſuperiority over them; that God is the only Potentate *(k)*; and that they owe their power to his free Grace, who has imparted to them the image of his ſupreme Dominion, and

(*k*) 1 Tim. vi. 15. μονος Δυναστης.

has

has placed them over others in the kingdom of his power*. But at the ſame time, they ſhould reflect, that God will, one day, require of them a ſtrict account, how they have uſed the power they had been entruſted with; and that he will then ſhew mercy to the poor and oppreſſed, but, as the book of Wiſdom expreſſes it *(l)*, will mightily torment the mighty men, *i. e.* thoſe who have uſed their power to the oppreſſion of others, and contrary to the end for which it was ordained. If theſe things were duly conſidered, thoſe who are in authority would uſe their power with fear and trembling. We ſhould not envy others their power, nor, when we ſee how the high and mighty are obeyed at a word, wiſh for their exalted ſtations. Let us rather ſit down contented in a low and humble ſtation, as it expoſes us to leſs danger here, and we ſhall have the leſs to anſwer for hereafter.

Give us herein to be of thy mind, O bleſſed Jeſus, who in the humble ſtate of thine abaſement, waſt ſubject to every ordinance of man, and, in the glorious ſtate of thine exaltation, didſt uſe thy unlimited power for the benefit of mankind, and the good of thy Church. Grant that all ſubjects may imitate thee in the former, and that all ſovereigns and perſons in power may follow thy illuſtrious example in the latter.

* σου ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεια, και ἡ δυναμις. Matth. vi. 13. *W.*
(*c*) Chap. vi. 2—7.

5. It

5. It was for our pride and haughtineſs, which would not be controlled by the Divine Law, that the Son of God ſubjected himſelf to the power of a foreign Judge.

Alas! the only Son of the Father, the Judge of all fleſh, would never have ſuffered himſelf to be brought before the Tribunal of a Roman Governor, and hear from him theſe inſulting words, 'Knoweſt thou not that I have power to crucify 'thee?' 'if it had not been for our Fall.' Our minds were filled with aſpiring thoughts; nothing but abſolute freedom and independency would ſatisfy us; and we were for being our own maſters, without any ſuperior to controll us. This haughty temper is innate in the meaneſt peaſant, who, naturally, will neither ſubmit to God or man. Therefore, He from whom men hold their power himſelf ſubmitted to human power, and, in order to atone for our arrogance and refractorineſs, humbled himſelf under the authority of a Pagan Judge. But if we would receive any benefit from Chriſt's abaſement, we muſt not continue under the dominion of this natural depravity; but, with ſhame, ſorrow, and contrition, bring our rebellious, refractory minds, which would tear aſunder the bands of all order and ſociety, to the obedience of the croſs, and pray that our ungovernable pride may be changed into ſubmiſſion and lowlineſs.

O my Saviour! do thou ſubdue our hearts, and break our ſtubborn tempers, and make them

them conformable to thy gentle, paſſive, and obedient mind. Give us ſuch a ready willingneſs to ſubmit to all lawful authority, that we may rather chooſe to obey than to command.

He, who ſuffers himſelf to be ſeduced to ſin by others, is by no means innocent in the ſight of God; though the perſon that ſeduced him has more to anſwer for.

The guilt of the ſeducer moſt certainly exceeds that of the ſeduced, and conſequently the former may expect a heavier judgment than the latter. This is evident from the words of our bleſſed Saviour: 'He who delivered me 'unto thee', and thus ſeduced thee to all theſe acts of injuſtice, 'hath the greater ſin.' In theſe words, our bleſſed Lord allows that there are degrees of ſin. Judas, Annas, and Caiaphas, together with the great Council of the Jews, ſinned more in their proceedings againſt Chriſt, than Pilate did: For they had more knowledge; their ſin was preceded by longer conſultations; they had likewiſe received more admonitions; they were under a greater obligation, by ſhewing a good example, to ſet Pilate in the right way; and laſtly, they added hypocriſy to their wickedneſs, and abuſed the Word of God, by making it a cloke for their villainy. Hence are derived the following rules, by which we may meaſure the degrees of thoſe ſins, which are committed under different circumſtances.

1. The

1. The more knowledge any perſon is endowed with, the greater is his ſin (*m*).

2. The more premeditation precedes any ſin, the greater is the ſin; ſince ſuch previous conſideration ſhews the force of the ſinful purpoſe, and a pertenacious perſeverance in wickedneſs.

3. The more admonitions have preceded any ſinful act, the greater is the ſin.

4. The greater the obligation a perſon has to ſet a good example to others, the greater the ſin which he commits.

5. The more hypocriſy is intermixed with a wicked action, the greater is the ſin. But at preſent I ſhall wave any farther enlargement upon this ſubject.

We ſhall at this time only take notice of the following rule, namely, That the ſin of the ſeducer is greater than the ſin of the ſeduced; and this obſervation is ſo clearly proved by the words of the Lord Jeſus, as to be above all contradiction. O that this truth may be particularly attended to by all thoſe, who have made ſuch progreſs in Satan's ſchool, that he can uſe them as engines to ſeduce others. Is it not ſufficient, ye ſons of wickedneſs, that you treaſure up againſt the day of wrath and the juſt judgment of God, a treaſure of wrath, by your own ſins? Will ye increaſe your damnation by ſeducing others to commit ſins, which will be placed to your enormous account? Ac-

(*m*) Luke xii. 47.

know-

knowledge your heinous guilt; lament the malignity of your hearts; humble yourſelves before your Lord and Saviour, who humbled himſelf under this kind of ſuffering, to obtain for you the forgiveneſs of your deep guilt, and the grace of repentance and amendment. But if Satan has made you ſeducers of others, be earneſt in your prayers, that you may be changed by the Divine Grace; ſo that others may be edified by your example, and brought into the way of life.

THE PRAYER.

WE thank thee, O heavenly Father, for giving up thy dear Son to a foreign power, tha the might expiate and atone for our Fall and diſobedience, by which we had, as far as in us lay, withdrawn ourſelves from our obedience to thee. We beſeech thee, that thou wilt, by thy Holy Spirit, ſoften and humble our ſtubborn hearts and our refractory will, and move us to a ſincere repentance, and faith in thy Son. We alſo thank thee, O faithful Saviour, that thou didſt ſubmit to be thus humbled and debaſed, that we might be exalted. Make us partakers of thy merit for the remiſſion of our ſins, and grant that we may follow thy example, and tread in thy footſteps; ſo that by ſubmitting ourſelves with thee here, we may alſo reign with thee hereafter. Amen.

CON-

CONSIDERATION XV.

Pilate's *laſt, but feeble, endeavour to releaſe the* LORD JESUS.

'(*a*) AND from thenceforth Pilate ſought to releaſe him: But the Jews cried out, ſaying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend: Whoſoever maketh himſelf a king ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar. When Pilate therefore heard that ſaying, he brought Jeſus forth, and ſat down in the Judgement-ſeat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the Preparation of the Paſſover, and about the ſixth hour: And he ſaith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him! away with him! crucify him! Pilate ſaith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief Prieſts anſwered, We have no King but Cæſar. When Pilate ſaw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and waſhed his hands before the multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the blood of this juſt perſon: See ye to it. Then anſwered all the people, and ſaid, His blood be on us, and on our children! Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified.'

(*a*) Matth. xxvii. 24, 25. John xix. 12—16.

In

In theſe words we have an account of the laſt fruitleſs attempt of Pilate to releaſe our bleſſed Saviour; in which we ſhall obſerve,

Firſt, Pilate's intention.

Secondly, The violent effort of the Jews which rendered his purpoſe ineffectual.

Thirdly, The conſequence of his timidity and irreſolution.

I.

Pilate's deſign is expreſſed in the following words: 'From thenceforth Pilate ſought to 'releaſe him (*b*).' Pilate had already laboured with this view, and had endeavoured to compaſs his ends partly by fair, and partly by unwarrantable, means. Now he again reſolves to ſet about it once more, and, by an authoritative order, at once to releaſe Jeſus. This freſh attempt of Pilate, we muſt ſuppoſe to have been occaſioned by our bleſſed Lord's words, when he ſaid, 'Thou couldeſt have 'no power at all againſt me, except it were 'given thee from above. Therefore he that 'delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.' In theſe remarkable words Jeſus makes mention of a power given to Pilate over his perſon from above; but, at the ſame time, ſignifies to him, that if he abuſed that power, he would commit a heinous ſin, and draw upon himſelf a grievous puniſhment from above. Now theſe

(*b*) John xix. 12.

were

were ſuch truths as immediately touched Pilate's natural conſcience to the quick; and this being added to the fear he was already ſeized with, on account of the information he had received that Jeſus was the Son of God, excited this pagan judge to make a freſh effort to releaſe Jeſus. Hence we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. A free confeſſion of the truth has a great influence over the human mind, and is attended with a bleſſing.

We here ſee in Pilate an inſtance, that ſome times even the moſt haughty and unjuſt perſons are moved by an ingenuous confeſſion. A ſimilar inſtance occurs in the life of St. Paul (*c*), who by a noble freedom and bold declaration of the truth, convinced his judge, that he had done nothing amiſs. The ſame effect the declarations of the primitive Chriſtians, in the ſucceeding perſecutions, had on the hearts of the Heathens; for by the power of truth, they made ſuch an impreſſion on the conſciences of their judges, that they were ſometimes obſerved to turn pale and tremble amidſt all the ſtate and pomp of their office. Let us therefore implore of God to give us the boldneſs of faith; and let us uſe it with humility and diſcretion according to our Saviour's example, and then it will prove a bleſſing to ourſelves and others.

(*c*) Acts xxvi. 31, 32.

2. God ſometimes cauſes the purpoſes of the wicked to turn out quite contrary to their expectations, in the event.

The chief Prieſts imagined, that by accuſing the bleſſed Jeſus of having made himſelf the Son of God, they ſhould quite overcome Pilate's reluctancy, and make him act according to their deſires. But this accuſation, on the contrary, only made Pilate the more cautious and fearful of condemning Chriſt, and conſequently more ſollicitous for having him releaſed. This is frequently the caſe in our days, Satan and the world often combine to do all the hurt they can to a ſoul, that is earneſtly bent on turning from them to Jeſus Chriſt. The former aſſails it from within, the latter attacks it from without. Both of them endeavour, to terrify the afflicted ſoul, ſo that it may caſt away all hopes of deliverance. By God's ſuperintending providence, theſe wicked machinations have quite another effect; for a ſoul thus agitated by the buffetings of Satan, and the injuries of the world, is driven to prayer and repentance, and by that means to the boſom of everlaſting love. Thus the goodneſs and wiſdom of God are able to turn the moſt pernicious views of Satan to the good of our ſouls. What an invaluable privilege is this of the children of God, that among all the devices of their ſpiritual and temporal enemies, they may be eaſy, confident, and undaunted? that they may joyfully ſay with the generous patriarch

patriarch *, 'Ye thought evil againſt me; but 'God meant it unto good.'

II.

In the next place, we are to conſider the violent effort, which rendered the purpoſe of Pilate ineffectual. As Pilate did not ſet out right at firſt, nor walk in the plain and ſtrait path of juſtice, his ſubſequent endeavours to releaſe Jeſus proved abortive; and his reſolution was ſo ſhaken by a violent tempeſt, that at length it was obliged to give way. For the Jews, perceiving what Pilate had in view, cried out, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not 'Cæſar's friend: whoſoever maketh himſelf a 'king, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar.' Here the Jews have recourſe again to their former accuſation, and charge our bleſſed Lord with crimes againſt the Roman Government. As Pilate had betrayed ſome viſible ſigns of fear upon hearing the other charge, namely, that Jeſus made himſelf the Son of God; they drop the theological article, and revive the old complaint, affirming that he ſet himſelf up for a King.

But here they alſo give freſh force to their firſt accuſation, by deducing from it ſuch an alarming inference, as might well ſtagger Pilate's reſolution. Their inference was this: Whoſoever maketh himſelf a King ſpeaketh againſt

* Joſeph. See Gen. l. 20.

Cæſar, i. e. oppoſes the Roman Emperor's right over the province of Judea, and thereby lays a foundation for tumults and rebellion. This poſition in itſelf is not ill grounded. When a perſon gives himſelf out to be a King, and attempts to get the government into his hands, in a country over which there is a ſettled ſovereign, he muſt undoubtedly be looked on as an enemy of the reigning ſovereign. But from this true poſition they draw a very wrong concluſion. " This Jeſus, ſay they, gives it out " in Judea that he is a king; therefore he " ſpeaks againſt Cæſar." From this they farther conclude, that if Pilate ſhould let this man go, he was not Cæſar's friend. For how ſhould he be a friend to the Emperor, who protected a perſon that was his open enemy; and when the priſoner is brought before him in bonds and fetters, in order to be puniſhed, is for letting him go, that he may again carry on his ſeditious practices againſt Cæſar. This falſe reaſoning ſtruck this mighty ſtateſman with a terrible pannic; and he was ſo entangled in this web which theſe ſophiſters had ſpun, that he was not able to extricate himſelf out of it. The fear of the Emperor's diſpleaſure, with which he was indirectly threatened, ſhook the foundations of his good intention, ſo that he fluctuated between doubts and fears.

Hence we ſhall deduce the following truths.

1. Satan is very dextrous in attacking every man on that ſide, where he can make the leaſt defence. This

This was the way he went to work with Pilate. The menace of the Emperor's diſpleaſure was a thunder-clap, which ſtruck him with ſuch dread and conſternation that he could not again collect himſelf. Thus Satan found out his weak ſide, where he was the leaſt prepared for an attack. For there is nothing which Miniſters of State are more afraid of than their ſovereign's diſpleaſure; being very ſenſible, that it may be attended with diſgrace and the loſs of all their temporal poſſeſſions.

This advantage the ſubtil fiend continually makes uſe of, to tempt men to ſin. He knows the natural conſtitution and predominant inclinations of every one, and directs his temptations accordingly. He knows how to lay the bait to allure, and at other times how to terrify the ſinner. The proud and ambitious man he entices to ſin by the hopes of temporal honours, and terrifies him with the fear of diſgrace, and of being deprived of his poſts and dignities. He allures a voluptuous ſenſualiſt by the bait of carnal delights and elegant entertainments; and, on the other hand, he terrifies him with the fear of affliction, impriſonment, diſtreſs, and pain. He draws in the miſer by the hopes of profit, and other temporal advantages, and terrifies him with the fear of loſing his eſtate and money. When, for inſtance, a man is immoderately fond of this world, and falls into ſuch circumſtances, that, on one ſide, he has hopes of making great additions to his fortune

by renouncing the truths of the Goſpel, and going over to the kingdom of darkneſs; but, on the other hand, by ſteadfaſtly adhering to the pure truth of the goſpel, he is in danger of being ſtripped of every thing he has; Satan points his batteries againſt that ſide of the heart where it is weakeſt. He lays hold of him by his fondneſs for earthly things, and ſuggeſts to him, that he may for once ſet aſide his conſcience, otherwiſe he muſt be reduced to want and poverty. At the ſame time, he repreſents the danger to be very great, and the loſs irretrievable; ſo that at length, the unwary ſinner, unleſs ſome higher ſtrength enable him to withſtand the temptation, and his ſoul be fortified by grace, ſurrenders himſelf on Satan's terms. Happy are they, who are made wiſe by the miſcarriage of others! who learn to ſecure their innocence, and to know their own weakneſs, that the evil one may not take advantage of it to their deſtruction.

2. We can never be ſecure from Satan's aſſaults till we have intrenched ourſelves within a ſettled reſolution of denying the world.

We are like an open city, without fortifications, walls, or motes; and conſequently cannot ſuſtain a ſiege. This Pilate found to be true by fatal experience. The favour of the Roman Emperor being, as he thought, of greater concern to him than a good conſcience and the favour of God, he at laſt ſunk under the temptation which aſſaulted him. By one indirect

direct menace of the Emperor's diſpleaſure, he lays down his arms. His haughtineſs which, but a little before, had diſplayed itſelf in theſe arrogant words, 'Knoweſt thou not that I 'have power to releaſe thee,' was at once pulled down; and the devil gained a compleat triumph over his weakneſs.

Thus it happens when a man accounts the friendſhip of the world, and favour of the Great, an indiſpenſible part of his happineſs. Then, in order to avoid the loſs of it, integrity and a good conſcience are frequently laid aſide, and he becomes the contemptible ſlave of thoſe whom he looked upon as his vaſſals. Here we ſee how far the natural love of virtue and juſtice extends; and that is no further than to the confines of denying the world. Pilate, for the ſake of Chriſt and his own integrity, ſhould have riſqued the danger of being informed againſt at Rome, as a favourer of the Emperor's enemies; on the contrary, he became a betrayer of juſtice, and delivered the innocent into the hands of his enemies. Let this be a warning, and powerful incitement to us, abſolutely to deny the world and all its ſinful cuſtoms. The world muſt be ſo little to our eyes, and our Saviour ſo great, that we ſhould be ready to part with all, rather than offend him by any deliberate ſin, or injure his honour. This renouncing of the world is the partition-wall between mere morality and genuine Chriſtianity. Whatever progreſs a perſon by his

natural ſtrength may make in the government of his paſſions, and the practice of outward moral virtues, if he does not deny himſelf, and renounce the world, he will yield to the firſt temptation that aſſaults him. Whoever does not fear and love God above all things, and put an entire truſt and confidence in him, will not be able to act even in a temporal office with untainted integrity, and a conſcience void of offence; much leſs will he be able worthily to diſcharge a ſpiritual office: But as ſoon as he is threatened by the great and powerful, he will, like Pilate, ſet aſide his conſcience, and do what he himſelf knows to be ſinful. In a word, he will not be able rightly to perform one ſingle duty that the Chriſtian religion requires. For however praiſe-worthy his intention may be, and though he has even made a good beginning towards putting it into execution; yet when he comes to be menaced by others, who ſay all manner of evil of him; he then forgets his laudable deſigns, conforms to the world, and again gives himſelf up to what he had hitherto avoided from the dictates of his conſcience. Hence we may ſee, that Chriſt lays no unneceſſary burden upon us, in requiring that we ſhould renounce the world; on the contrary, we ſhould look upon it as a neceſſary preſervative againſt the ſnares of the tempter.

III.

III.

We come, in the laſt place, to conſider the conſequence of Pilate's timidity and irreſolution; and here the three following particulars deſerve our notice.

Firſt, The preparation made for condemning the Lord Jeſus. This is deſcribed in theſe words: 'When Pilate therefore heard that 'ſaying, he brought Jeſus forth,' out of the hall of Judgement, where he had privately examined him whether he was the Son of God, 'and ſat down in the Judgement-ſeat, in a 'place that is called the Pavement, but in the 'Hebrew Gabbatha.' There was probably a pompous tribunal erected adjoining to Pilate's houſe, on a raiſed paved area, where he uſually pronounced ſentence of death on malefactors *. In this elevated ſeat of judgement he ſeats himſelf with great parade; and as he had extremely weakened his authority by his ſcandalous pliableneſs throughout this whole affair, he was now for recovering the reſpect due to him, by pronouncing ſentence on Jeſus with great pomp and ſolemnity.

* Alii alium editum locum propè Templum, quem Josephus *Xyſtum* appellat, hîc deſignari putant, quam ſententiam pluribus adſtruit Cl. Lampius *ad Johan.* xix. 14. p. 579, *& ſeqq.* quæ tamen parùm nobis probabilis videtur.

St. John likewiſe particularly ſpecifies the time of the day, and the ſeaſon of the year, when this happened. Concerning the latter the Evangeliſt ſays, 'It was the Preparation,' *i. e.* the day before the Sabbath (*d*), or the Friday preceding the Paſſover, when they prepared themſelves for the approaching Sabbath, which was a high day, and to be obſerved with particular ſolemnity. As for the time of the day, the Evangeliſt obſerves, that it was 'about the ſixth hour,' *i. e.* according to our computation of time, about twelve of the clock at noon. For the Jews uſed to compute their hours from Sun riſing, and divided the day into twelve equal parts or hours (*e*). Thus it appears, that it was twelve of the clock, or near mid-day. There is nothing contradictory to this in the Goſpel by St. Mark (*f*), who ſays, that it was about the third hour when they crucified our bleſſed Saviour. For either theſe words may be rendered *, 'It was the third 'hour, after they had crucified him,' namely, when the ſoldiers, as we have obſerved above, parted his garments; or the third hour in St. Mark may be underſtood of the ſecond larger

(*d*) Mark xv. 42. (*e*) See John xi. 9. 'Are there not 'twelve hours in the day?'

(*f*) Chap. xv. 25. ἦν δὲ ὥρα τριτη, και ἐσταυρωσαν αὐτον.

* Uti monet HADR. RELANDUS *in Antiqu. Hebr. part.* IV. C. I. §. 27. Sic etiam ARABS reddit: *Et illud* fiebat *tertiâ horâ, quum* JESUS *crucifixus eſſet.*

diviſion

diviſion of the day, which began at the end of the third hour from Sun-riſing †. For as the Jews divided the night into four parts or watches; ſo likewiſe they divided the day into four parts or equal diviſions, called the Temple-hours, or hours of prayer. Each of theſe diviſions took its name from the hour of the day, at the end of which it began. For inſtance, the firſt quarter or diviſion of the day was called the firſt Temple-hour, and comprehended the firſt, ſecond, and third, of the twelve common hours of the day. The ſecond diviſion was called the third Temple-hour, which laſted from the fourth to the ſixth hour of the day incluſively, in which the condemnation of Jeſus happened. The third great diviſion was called the ſixth hour, which included the ſeventh, eighth, and ninth hour of the day, during which our bleſſed Saviour was crucified. The fourth diviſion was called the ninth hour, and this included the

† *Sic* Jo. Gerhardus in Harmonia Evangeliſtarum, Mich. Waltherus in Harmonia Biblica, Alex. Morus in Cauſſa Dei p. 114. Thomas Goodwin in Moſe et Aarone lib. III. C. I. §. V. ſeqq. *et alii plures. Objicit* Hardian. Relandus, *in Antiq. Hebr. part.* IV. C. I. §. XVII. *quadripartitam illam horarum diviſionem incognitam priſcis Judæis fuiſſe. Sed oſtenderunt alii mentionem earum in ſcriptis Judæorum paſſim omnino fieri, ut Gemara Babylonica codicis* Avoda Sara. p. 3. *et apud* Maimonidem *ad* Berachot C. I. Miſchna II. *ubi ſcribit:* De die ſcias, omnes illas horas, quarum in *Miſchna* mentio fit, eſſe horas temporales, quales duodecim numerantur interdiu. Quando verò in *Miſchna* traditur, uſque ad tres horas, idem eſt, ac ſi dixiſſet, donec finiatur רביע יום אחד hoc eſt, quadrans diei primus.

tenth,

tenth, eleventh, and twelfth hour of the day *. By either of theſe methods, the two Evangeliſts may very eaſily be reconciled, without the leaſt neceſſity of making any alteration in the

* This will be more eaſily comprehended from the following Table, the firſt Column, of which exhibits the larger Diviſions or Temple-hours; the ſecond Column, the common Jewiſh hours; and the third, the hours of the day according to our computation of time.

Temple-hours or one fourth of the day.	Jewiſh common hours.	European hours.
		Morning
	1ſt	VII
Firſt	2d	VIII
	3d	IX
	4th	X
Third	5th	XI
	6th	XII
		Afternoon
	7th	I
Sixth	8th	II
	9th	III
	10th	IV
Ninth	11th	V
	12th	VI

Note. The longeſt day at the Meridian of Jeruſalem is about fourteen hours, and the ſhorteſt about ten, both which were divided by the Jews into twelve equal parts or Jewiſh hours. Hence it appears that their common hours in ſummer were ſomething longer than ours, and in winter the reverſe. However, the difference in the Jewiſh hours was almoſt imperceptible, as the inequality of their days was much leſs than in our climate. *W.*

text,

text *, of either St. John's or St. Mark's Goſpel. Indeed there are a few copies where the fourteenth verſe of the nineteenth chapter of St. John runs thus, 'It was about the third hour.' This was the preparation which Pilate made for condemning the Lord Jeſus. After this follows

Secondly, Pilate's laſt effort to releaſe our bleſſed Lord; but this was very faint, and proved ineffectual. 'And he ſaid unto the 'Jews, Behold your King!' As if he had ſaid, Look on him again; conſider how ſeverely he has been handled, by ſcourging and other abuſes. Suppoſe he has acted indiſcreetly, he ſeems to have been ſufficiently puniſhed; for you ſee what a wretched ſpectacle he is. Now I refer it to you, whether it would not better become you to ſhew him mercy and ſpare his life, than to puniſh him any farther.

But the Jews cried out, 'Away with him! 'Away with him! He is none of our King, 'Crucify him!' Hence it appears, that theſe words of Pilate only added fuel to the flames. 'Pilate then ſaith unto them, ſhall I crucify your 'King?' He now would fain work on them by remonſtrating, that ſuch an action would be a ſcandal to them, and what an indelible ſtain they would bring on their nation, by occaſioning it to be ſaid by foreigners, The Jews ſuf-

*Conferatur CL. LAMPII, *Comm. in Johann. Tom.* III. p. 582. et, qui plures de horum locorum conciliatione ſententias congeſſit, CL. WOLFIUS, in *Curis Philol.* p. 969. *et. ſq.*

fered

fered their King to be crucified. But alas! ſuch motives had little weight with a tumultuous rabble, frantic with rage and cruelty. Upon other occaſions, men are apt to ſtand very much on their reputation, and think that whoever touches their character, touches their life. But this their ſo highly valued reputation they willingly ſacrifice to their hatred againſt Chriſt.

On this remonſtrance of Pilate, the chief Prieſts at laſt broke out into this declaration, which redounds to their eternal infamy. 'We 'have no King but Cæſar.' At other times they grievouſly murmured againſt the Roman yoke, and held it inconſiſtent with their honour and liberty, to pay tribute to the Emperor; but their hatred againſt Chriſt made them now pretend to be very loyal ſubjects to Cæſar, rather than acknowledge for their Meſſiah and King, the unhappy victim of their malice who now ſtood before them; and rather than take on themſelves the eaſy yoke of Chriſt's Goſpel, they chooſe to be vaſſals and ſervants to the tyrannical and cruel Tiberius. In this remarkable declaration, the Prieſts and Elders of the people proceeded to ſuch a pitch of abandoned wickedneſs, as publicly to diſown the hope of Iſrael, namely, the Meſſiah, who had been promiſed to them under the title of a King, and to deny this important article of their religion, before a Pagan Governor. At the ſame time, by theſe words, 'We have no king but Cæſar,' they again indirectly threatened him with the Emperor's diſ-

diſpleaſure: As if they had ſaid, "We are loyal "ſubjects to the Roman Emperor, and have "brought this rebel before you to be puniſhed. "Now if you diſcharge him, we are obliged in "conſcience as Prieſts and Rulers, to lay a re-"port of it before his Imperial Majeſty." This was the laſt aſſault on Pilate's heart, which carried the fortreſs after a faint reſiſtance of ſome hours. Upon this followed

Thirdly, The actual condemnation of the Lord Jeſus; which is thus related by St. Matthew (*g*), and in our opinion, may very properly be introduced in this place. 'When 'Pilate ſaw that he could prevail nothing, but 'that rather a tumult was made; he took water, 'and waſhed his hands before the multitude, 'ſaying, I am innocent of the blood of this 'juſt perſon: See ye to it. Then anſwered all 'the people, and ſaid, His blood be on us and 'our children! Then he delivered him to be 'crucified.' In this account we may obſerve

1. The motives that induced Pilate to condemn Jeſus. Theſe were not any crimes which our Lord had committed; for of thoſe which had been laid to his chage, the Judge had ſeveral times publicly acquitted him. Pilate therefore was at laſt induced to pronounce the ſentence, partly becauſe there were no hopes of giving a turn to the affair, by bringing the Jews to conſent that Jeſus ſhould be releaſed; and partly becauſe there was reaſon to fear that

(*g*) Chap. xxvii. 24, 25.

farther

farther oppoſition might occaſion an inſurrection: For in ſuch a caſe the people would have aſſaulted and ſacked the Governor's houſe; and conſequently Pilate have been brought under much greater difficulties to defend his conduct at the Court of Rome. Theſe were the motives by which Pilate was at laſt induced to proceed to the condemnation of our bleſſed Saviour.

2. Pilate's declaration and proteſt, antecedent to the ſentence. 'Pilate, as the Evangeliſt ob-'ſerves, took water, and waſhed his hands 'before the multitude.' It was an uſual ceremony both among the Jews * (*b*) and Heathens †, to waſh the hands as a token of a perſon's innocence. This cuſtom Pilate here obſerves, and, beſides the mere ceremony, expreſſes in words what he intended by this ſymbol, by ſaying, 'I am innocent of the blood 'of this juſt man: See you to it.' By this, he once more publicly acknowledges the innocence of the Lord Jeſus, whom he ſtiles a juſt man, an appellation which Pilate's wife had before given to our bleſſed Saviour. He then turns off the blame of Chriſt's death from himſelf, and lays it on the conſciences of the Jews. Thus

* *Apud Judæos tres lotionis ſpecies uſitatas fuiſſe, nempe*, ordinariam, Phariſaicam *et* ſignificativam *obſervat* THOM. GOODWIN, in Moſe et Aarone, Lib. I. C. X. §. XV.

(*b*) Deut. xxi. 6.

†. Vid. Jo. LOMEIER. de luſtrationibus, p. 79. CORN. ADAMI Obſerv. Theol. Philol. p. 190. *Meritò autem Pilato acclamaveris verbis* OVIDII, Faſtorum Lib. II. v. 45.

Ah nimium faciles, qui triſtia crimina cædis
Flumineâ tolli poſſe putetis aquâ!

his

his deſign was, by waſhing his hands, to hint to the Jews, that as his hands which he had juſt waſhed were entirely clean; ſo would he be clear from all guilt, on account of the ſentence and execution of this juſt man. As if he had ſaid, You have abſolutely compelled me to order this innocent perſon to be crucified and put to death; and you muſt be anſwerable for it before God and man.

Upon this, theſe infatuated wretches, without any ſcruple, took the guilt of this horrid crime on their own conſciences; and unanimouſly cried out, 'His blood be on us, and 'on our children!' By this they ſignified, that they were certainly convinced that this Jeſus deſerved to die as a ſeducer of the people, and that Pliate had no manner of reaſon to be apprehenſive of being called to any account for it; but that they dealt ſincerely with him, and would be anſwerable for any blame which he might incur by it, before God and man. Nay, they farther engaged their own perſons and their children, that the condemnation of this man would not be followed by any puniſhment; and if ſuch a thing ſhould happen, which was not at all probable, they ſolemnly promiſed to take the whole of it on themſelves and their poſterity. 'His blood, ſaid they, be on us, and 'on our children.' O dreadful words, which indicate the greateſt infatuation and obduracy! How ſoon did that wretched nation feel the load of this curſe to which they impiouſly devoted

themſelves, and which fell in a moſt ſignal manner on their heads, and that of their deſcendants, who have been groaning under its oppreſſive weight more than ſeventeen centuries*.

3. We

* The following ſhort account of the accompliſhment of this curſe on the devoted heads of the Jews, may not be unacceptable to the reader. *W.*

Titus ſat before Jeruſalem about the beginning of April, a few days before the feaſt of the Paſſover, which had brought thither an innumerable multitude of Jews from all parts of the earth. Thus the Supreme Being permitted, by an effect of his juſt vengeance, that almoſt all the Jewiſh nation was now ſhut up in Jeruſalem, as in a priſon, to ſolemnize the ſame feaſt, in which, thirty ſeven years before, they had crucified the Lord of Glory. This vaſt confluence of people adding to the ſcarcity of proviſions, which had before been occaſioned by the mercileſs rage of the ſeditious Simon and John, ſoon overwhelmed the city with a general famine. They had not only the Romans to fight with, but hunger and want, and enemies alſo within their own bowels.

While Titus was employed in forming the ſiege, and for a while diſcontinued the attack; the Jews, taking the opportunity of this ſuſpenſion of arms, fell upon one another. The fourteenth of April, which was the day of unleavened bread, or the eve of the Paſſover, Eleazar having opened the inner gates of the Temple, in order to let in thoſe who ſhould come to offer ſacrifices; John of Guiſcala ordered a ſelect party of his own men to croud in among the reſt, with ſwords hid under their clothes, and to take poſſeſſion of that part of the Temple. This was no ſooner done, than, ſhewing their arms, they killed Eleazar, and all who had the misfortune to come within their reach. In ſhort, nothing but deceit, battle, and murder, paſſed between the factious Jews, when they had any reſpite from defending the walls of the city againſt the Romans.

Titus, having made a breach in the outermoſt wall, being loth to deſtroy the city, ſent overtures of peace to the Jews. which they obſtinately refuſed, Upon this, Titus prepared for a double attack, having divided his army into two bodies for that purpoſe. And now, as the famine began to preſs ſore within the city, numbers of the Jews uſed to travel out in the night, in order

3. We have here the ſentence itſelf: 'Then 'he delivered him to be crucified.' Now Pilate, ſitting

order to gather roots and herbs for their ſubſiſtence. Titus, having notice of this, placed ambuſcades round the city; by which method ſuch a multitude of them were apprehended, that, when Titus commanded them all to be executed, there was neither room nor Croſſes enough to anſwer the purpoſe.

Upon this, the Jews met with ſome little ſucceſs, by burning the machines employed by the Romans in the ſiege; which animated the former, and confirmed them in their obſtinate reſiſtance. Titus, hereupon, ſummoned a council of his general officers, who, according to our Saviour's prediction, reſolved to compaſs the city with a trench (*a*), as the only way to ſucceed in their enterpriſe.

And now, the Jews were reduced to the utmoſt deſpair. The famine devoured whole families, and the houſes, as well as the ſtreets, were full of dead bodies; no one taking any care to bury them. All the inhabitants, excepting thoſe who compoſed the faction of John and Simon, looked more like apparitions than living men. The many intolerable hardſhips, which the Jews ſuffered through the cruel treatment of their own ſeditious countrymen, may be well imagined, but cannot be deſcribed. They not only plundered them of all the means of ſubſiſtence, but ſhamefully inſulted and abuſed them in the agonies of death. Titus being informed of their miſery, and ſeeing the prodigious number of dead bodies thrown over the walls, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and took God to witneſs, that he was not the cauſe of theſe calamities. At this time, many impoſtors, pretending to revelations from heaven, flattered the Jews with hopes of ſpeedy deliverance. Therefore they would not hearken to the kind remonſtrance of Titus, though they had loſt 715,080 perſons by the mortality which raged in the city, from the 14th of April to the 1ſt of July: Beſides, they were ſo oppreſſed by famine, that even dung ſeemed a feaſt to them, and a woman of diſtinction killed and eat her own child.

Upon this, Titus renewing the attack, gained poſſeſſion of one half of the city, and, in two days after, of the Temple itſelf, by ſetting fire to the gates of it. His great ambition was to have preſerved the Temple. But one of the ſoldiers, as if directed from above, taking a lighted piece of wood, and throw-

(*a*) Luke xix. 43, 44.

ſitting with great pomp on his Judgment-ſeat, pronounced the ſentence for crucifying Jeſus, and

ing it, contrary to the expreſs command of Titus, into the buildings on the north ſide of it; the flame immediately ſpread with ſuch violence, that it reached and conſumed the Temple, in ſpite of Titus's utmoſt endeavours to prevent it. This happened on the ſame day of the month, viz. the 10th of Auguſt, on which it had been formerly burnt by the Chaldæans under Nebuchadnezzar. Moſt of thoſe perſons, whom the Romans found in the Temple, were put to the ſword, without mercy, or diſtinction either of age or ſex. Six thouſand others who had, on the villainous ſuggeſtion of a falſe prophet, retired to a gallery of the outer Temple, were likewiſe all deſtroyed, either in the attempt to ſave themſelves by jumping down, or by the devouring flames.

The Temple being thus reduced to aſhes, the Romans, with loud acclamations of joy, conferred on Titus the title of *Imperator*, and would alſo have crowned him as a Conqueror; but he peremptorily refuſed it, ſaying, "The Supreme Power has "ſignally appeared for me, during all the time of this ſiege. It "is not I that have done all this; I have only been an inſtru-"ment in His almighty hand to execute vengeance upon a per-"fidious people."

Notwithſtanding all theſe things, the Seditious went on with their devaſtation and barbarity. For they maſſacred 6400 of their own countrymen for the ſake of their wealth, and retired with it into the other part of the city called Sion, where they ſtill reſolved obſtinately to defend themſelves. But Titus having made an effort with his battering rams on the 7th of September, broke down a part of the wall. Upon this the rebels were ſtruck with ſuch a conſternation, that even common ſenſe forſook them; ſo that they fled to dens, caves, and even to privies, to hide themſelves.

Titus, on his entry into the higher part of the city, gave orders to his men to kill none but thoſe who made reſiſtance; however, they put to the ſword all that were either ſick or old, reſerving no priſoners that were not young and healthy. By this means, only 97,000 were carried away captives, and 1,100,000 periſhed during the ſiege. Titus, in the next place, commanded his ſoldiers to demoliſh the Temple to its very foundations; and thus fulfilled the prediction of our Saviour, who ſaid to the Jews, 'There ſhall not be left here one ſtone upon another,

and declared that he would give him up to his ſoldiers to be crucified; ſince the Jews had openly

'ther, that ſhall not be thrown down *(b)*.' He likewiſe levelled with the ground all the reſt of the city, except three towers, and a part of the wall, which he left as a monument to poſterity of the former beauty of the place; and paſſed a plough over the ruins of the city and Temple, in token of their everlaſting deſolation.

The death of the Jewiſh œconomy immediately followed the reſurrection of our Lord, and Titus was the inſtrument in the hand of Providence to put a final period to it. For, ever ſince the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the Jews have had neither king nor prophet, temple nor ſacrifice; but have been diſperſed among all nations, yet unmixed, and had the mortification to ſee the ſervants of the Lord 'called by another name.' They firſt exhauſted their rage againſt the 'Stone which the builders 'rejected,' and, as our Saviour foretold them, it has 'grinded 'them to powder.' This ſignal effect of the juſt vengeance of God, againſt this treacherous people, who could ſay, 'His blood 'be on us, and on our children,' and crucified their Meſſiah, the Saviour of the world, is an adamantine ſeal to the many other indiſputable proofs, that aſſure and will eternize the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

Juſtus Lipſius, in his Diſſertation on the ſiege of Jeruſalem, has made the following calculation of the number of Jews, who were killed within the ſpace of ſeven years in their domeſtic commotions and wars with the Romans, or taken priſoners and carried into captivity.

Killed at Jeruſalem by the order of Geſſidus Florus, the Procurator of Judea	630
At Cæſarea, by the inhabitants	10,000
At Scythopolis	13,000
At Aſcalon	2500
At Ptolemais	2000
At Alexandria	50,000
At Damaſcus	10,000
At the taking of Joppa	8400
At Zabulon, a fortified city	2000
In the battle of Aſcalon	10,000
Carrried over	108,530

(b) Matth. xxiv. 2.

openly declared, that they would be anſwerable for all the guilt and ill conſequences that might attend this proceeding. On theſe circumſtances, we ſhall make the following obſervations, with which we ſhall conclude this Conſideration.

Firſt, That every circumſtance of our bleſſed Saviour's paſſion has been conducted by the Divine Wiſdom.

1. It was not by mere accident that Pilate pronounced ſentence on the bleſſed Jeſus in a place, which from its elevation was called Gabbatha. For this condemned Jeſus was to ſtand for an enſign lifted up on high to all nations, to which the Gentiles ſhould ſeek (*p*).

Brought over	108,530
By an ambuſcade	8000
At Apheca	15,000
On Mount Garizim	11,600
At Jotapata	30,000
At the ſecond taking of Joppa	4200
At Taricheæ	6400
At Gamala	9000
At Guiſchala	2000
Taken priſoners at the ſame place	2200
In the villages of the Edomites	10,000
At Geraſo	1000
At Machæro	1700
In the foreſt of Jarda	3000
In the Caſtle of Maſada	960
At Cyrene	3000
At Jeruſalem, killed, and periſhed by famine, &c.	1,000,000
Taken Priſoners at the ſame place	97,000
Total,	1,339,690

(*p*) Iſaiah xi. 10. 'And in that day there ſhall be a root of 'Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an Enſign of the people; to it ſhall 'the Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glorious.'

There-

Therefore his ſentence of condemnation was to be pronounced in a raiſed place, publicly in the eyes of the whole world, and not in a corner.

2. The ſpecifying of the hour, in which the ſentence was pronounced, indicates, that as God tells the hours in the ſufferings of his beloved Son, ſo does he likewiſe in the ſufferings of his children by grace and adoption. Time never ſeems more tedious to men, than when they labour under ſufferings. Then they not only count the days, but the very hours and minutes. But God likewiſe counts the hours of their ſufferings, and for every hour of pain, reproach, or mockery, will add a new gem to their diadem of glory. Hence we ought to be thoroughly perſuaded, that as the Providence of God over-ruled with regard to the time and place of the condemnation and crucifixion of our bleſſed Lord, ſo likewiſe will it alſo direct the time and place of our ſufferings for his ſake; and that no affliction ſhall befall us, at any place or time but by the appointment or permiſſion of our heavenly Father, the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events.

Secondly, As we often illegally place ourſelves on the Judgment-ſeat of private cenſure, to condemn our innocent neighbour; ſo the Son of God was to ſuffer himſelf to be condemned, by an iniquitous judge on his ſeat of judgment.

Our bleſſed Lord has ſolemnly warned us, ſaying, 'Judge not; Condemn not;' but who

is it that pays a due regard to theſe precepts? Of all our Saviour's injunctions, not one is more frequently violated than this; and this is frequently done, not only by the ignorant and unlearned, but by thoſe alſo who know better, and obſerve a decent regard to religion in their outward behaviour. At polite viſits and other meetings, what is the uſual topic of converſation, but cenſure? We condemn our abſent neighbour; his geſture, his ſayings, and all his actions are canvaſſed over, expoſed, cenſured, and judged, without the leaſt indulgence. On ſuch occaſions, frequently a definitive ſentence is unjuſtly pronounced, without allowing the party condemned a hearing. Now as we ſo often aſcend the ſeat of judgment, and, inſtead of judging ourſelves, and ſtrictly examining our own actions, precipitately condemn our neighbour; the Son of God was pleaſed to ſubmit to this condemnation, which was pronounced from an unjuſt tribunal. May this conſideration awaken in us all an abſolute abhorrence of all ſcandal, rigid cenſures, and calumny.

Thirdly, So great is the benevolence of God, that he often out of his exuberant goodneſs, as it were, preſſes his overtures of grace on man.

As Pilate, in the inſtance before us, is for obtruding Jeſus on the Jews as their King, when they vehemently rejected him, and would hear of no ſuch thing; God often proceeds in the ſame manner with ſinners, not only by

by making a tender of his grace to them with ſingular impreſſions; but he, as it were, preſſes them to accept of it. Sometimes, in order to win their ſtubborn and refractory hearts, he ſhowers down a profuſion of bleſſings on them. Sometimes he finds it neceſſary to make uſe of the rod of correction; lays them on a ſick bed; permits them to fall into difficulties; and by theſe viſitations, earneſtly labours to gain their minds. But if, after all theſe indulgent trials and awakening calls, they ſtill continue unmoved; what can follow but a ſevere account for the obſtinate rejection of ſuch repeated offers of grace? But, alas! how often have we been thus inſenſible to the convictions, admonitions, and chaſtiſements, of God's bleſſed Spirit; ſo that in a carnal ſecurity, we have wiſhed to ſhake them off. Now that even this grievous ſin might be remitted to the penitent, the Son of God has, by theſe circumſtances of his paſſion, acquired the remiſſion of them.

Fourthly, The ſin of the Jews in rejecting the Meſſiah, is daily committed among Chriſtians.

This is frequently done by thoſe worldings, who prefer their carnal luſts and temporal enjoyments to that fellowſhip of Jeſus Chriſt, to which they are called in the Goſpel. The Jews cried out, 'We have no king but Cæſar!' And does not the covetous man cry out, I have no king but Mammon? The proud and ambitious cries out, I have no king but my honour

and

and reputation! The ſenſualiſt cries out, I have no king but pleaſure! Away with ſuch a king, who commands me to crucify my fleſh, who would oblige me to break with my jovial companions, and live like a hermit; away with him! ſuch a ſovereign ſhall by no means rule over me. But They are likewiſe guilty of the ſame crime as the Jews were, though in an indirect manner, who ſeek ſalvation in any other name, but that by which God has appointed that we ſhould be ſaved (*q*). Thoſe who would obtain an exemption from puniſhment, forgiveneſs of ſins, eternal life and ſalvation, by the merits and interceſſion of others among the living or the dead, preſumptuouſly reject the Son of God, the only Mediator and Saviour of mankind, and chuſe for themſelves other ſaviours, as impotent as themſelves. May the Lord keep us from ſuch an infatuation, that we may not feel the truth of theſe words of the Pſalmiſt: 'Their ſorrows ſhall be multiplied that haſten 'after another God (*r*).'

Fifthly, The blood of Chriſt has both a vindictive, and a conciliatory power.

It is poured down in vengeance on thoſe who treſpaſs againſt it, either by placing in it a carnal and preſumptuous confidence, notwithſtanding their wicked lives and impenitent hearts; or by

(*q*) Acts iv. 12. 'Neither is there ſalvation in any other; for 'there is none other name under heaven given among men, 'whereby we muſt be ſaved.'

(*r*) Pſ. xvi. 4.

tread-

treading under foot, and accounting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Theſe deluded ſinners will, by the Divine juſtice, be perſecuted as murderers of Chriſt; and the blood of the Lamb of God, which was ſhed for the purifying of the conſcience and the forgiveneſs of ſins, will be poured on them in vengeance and judgments. On the other hand, its healing, conciliatory power manifeſts itſelf to all humble, broken, and contrite hearts. It is to them the means of juſtification, and all their ſins will be forgiven them in conſideration of this precious blood. It is poured upon them in ſanctification and holineſs; for if they walk in the light, it more and more cleanſes them from all ſin and filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit (*s*). It alſo pours inexpreſſible bleſſings on their hour of death, and opens to them a paſſage from death unto life(*t*).

May God of his infinite mercy grant, that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt may, in this bleſſed manner be on us, and on our children, and that it may manifeſt its reconciling, juſtifying, and ſanctifying power in all our hearts! May he further be pleaſed to grant, that all the foregoing Conſiderations on the ſufferings of Chriſt before the civil Tribunal of Pilate and Herod may be of real benefit to our immortal ſouls!

(*s*) 1 John i. 7. 2 Cor. vii. 1. (*t*) John v. 24.

PRAY-

THE PRAYER.

O Faithful Saviour! may thy blood be on us, and on our children, not in its vindictive, but its conciliatory power, to the quieting of our conſciences, the ſanctifying of our ſouls, and the purifying of our hearts. Bleſs all the Conſiderations on this part of thy ſufferings; and grant that we may not loſe or throw away any grace wrought in us, by the co-operation of thy good Spirit. We recommend to thee the ſeed of ſo many important and ſaving truths, now ſown; water them with the ſalutary dew of thy bleſſing, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praiſe of thy name. Amen.

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The END of the SECOND VOLUME.

